

Managing the challenges of forced displacement

Meeting the increasing challenges of those affected by forced displacement including displaced families, host communities and national systems facing increased demand, requires support in two key areas:

- I. **A better transition from humanitarian operations to longer-term actions** through joint government and international actor initiatives that more effectively manage protracted displacement.
- II. **Better preparedness and contingency planning built into national systems** that more effectively prepares for and responds to multiple waves of displacement.

Supporting a transition out of humanitarian assistance accompanied by international protection services means putting in place an overall referral process to national government systems, internationally supported development programmes, and a reinforcement of informal and locally-led systems where people cannot rely on the government. In many contexts, many of the functions of humanitarian and protection sectors or clusters fall within the functions of social protection programmes led by the government and development actors (Figure 1).

As such, investment in social protection systems is highly strategic for the management of protracted displacement and for a better preparation around situations generating multiple waves of displacement.

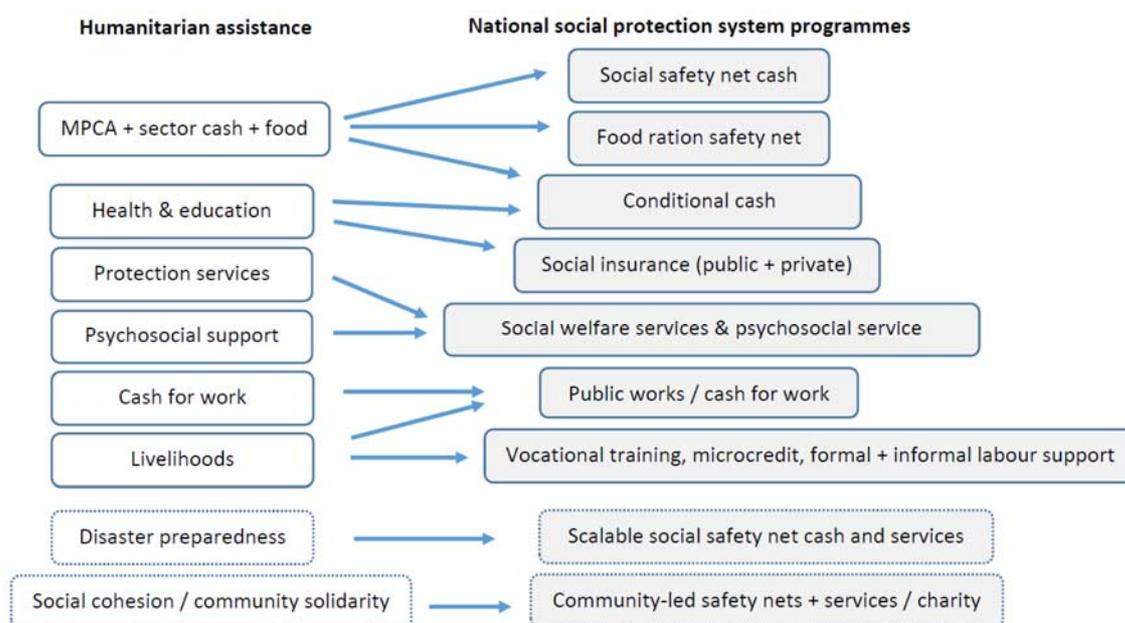


Figure 1: Comparison of humanitarian assistance with social protection systems programmes in Iraq

Further, social protection systems are designed to preferentially support the neediest families whilst helping to build their resilience against household-level shocks, and increasingly, to large-scale disaster using shock-responsive or adaptive social protection mechanisms. The successful management of protracted displacement through social protection programmes that support both poor host and displaced families sets up an enabling environment for sustainable solutions to forced displacement. To do this, governments require economic and social incentives to open up their systems to forcibly displaced people, albeit for a timebound period that is carefully planned with the international humanitarian community as a part of an alignment (*systems in parallel*) or transition (*systems are merged*) strategy. Figure 2 illustrates a step-wise change in focus moving from (1) a parallel and internationally led humanitarian assistance system to (2) building in features compatibility to the national social protection system eventually preparing the way for (3) harmonised programming between international and government programmes and (4) the eventual progressive inclusion of displaced people into the national system as part of a timebound or permanent solution to displacement. Each step is enabled by a careful tailoring of political, economic and social incentives for the government, informed by a strong evidence base on the impacts and opportunities arising from displaced populations.

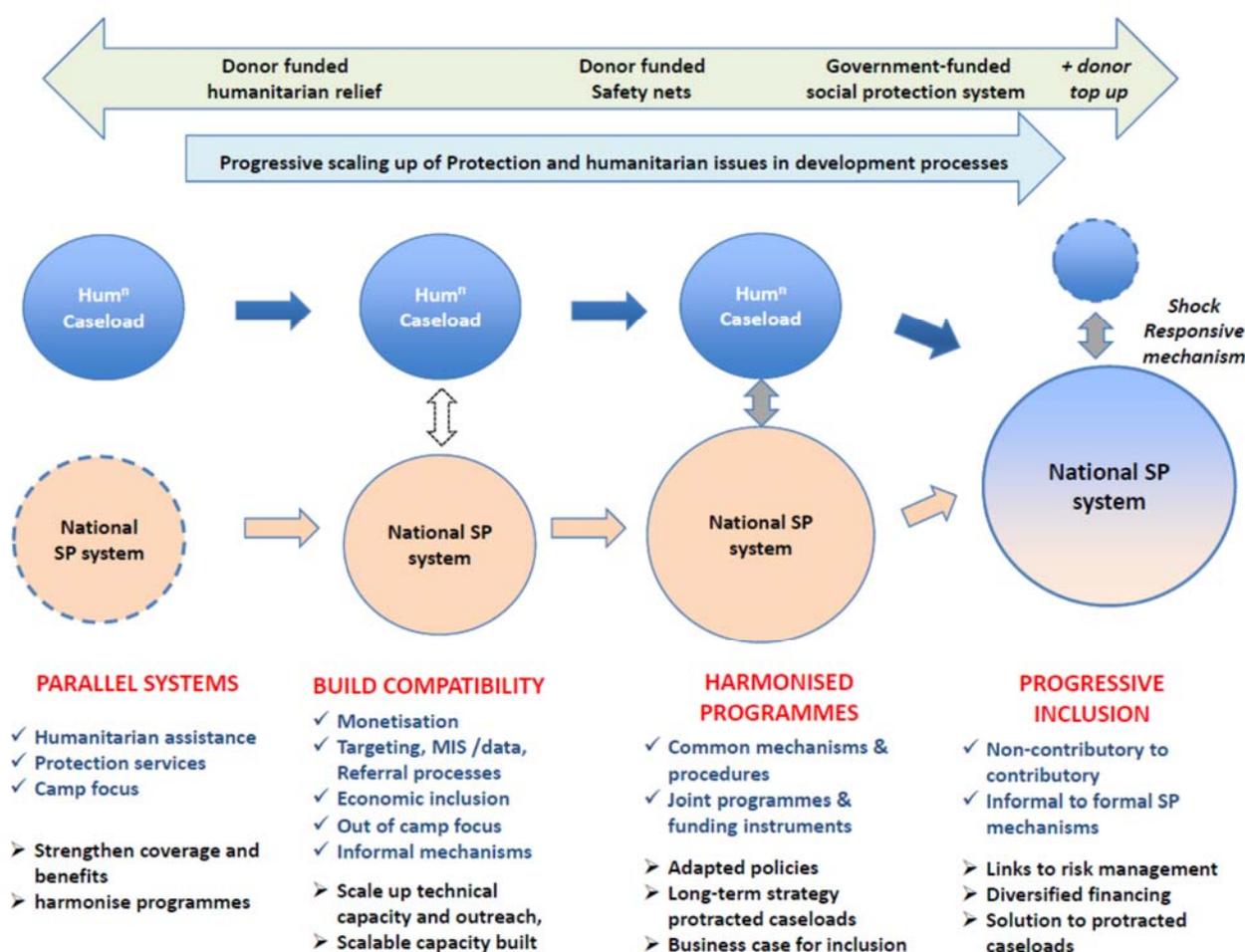


Figure 2: Progressive actions that facilitate an overall transition process from internationally-led and parallel humanitarian assistance to government led national systems that include displaced people.

Operational support for harnessing social protection systems to better manage forced displacement needs to be adapted according to three key factors:

1. **The displacement context** governing the needs of those displaced and the impact on host communities and national systems.
2. **The maturity and coverage of the national social protection system** governing how far a government can take responsibility for the needs of families and its coverage.
3. **The legal framework and application of government policies** that regulate real access to national social protection programmes for displaced people.

Many of the sequencing and contextual adaptations outlined in the following sections, are summarised in Figure 2 below. After the onset of displacement, international actors can **respond** to emergency needs and **mitigate** impacts on host families and national social services by helping the state to implement cash and in-kind assistance via the national social safety net programme. Humanitarian actors can also set up humanitarian assistance operations aligned to the national system where the state refuses or does not have the capacity to act. After the main emergency phase, actions help people to **settle** in dignified conditions during protracted displacement by including people in national systems as part of a long-term **solution**, working to **prevent** further displacement. Beneficiaries can be graduated from non-contributory cash and in-kind assistance around emergencies to other state-led or private sector health- and work-benefit schemes and social services. The shift from non-contributory to contributory social protection benefits is facilitated by self-reliance efforts that increases access to financial services, livelihoods and jobs. Both the informal and formal labour markets that forcibly displaced people access need to be supported responsibly to ensure that opportunities are not taken away from poor host families.

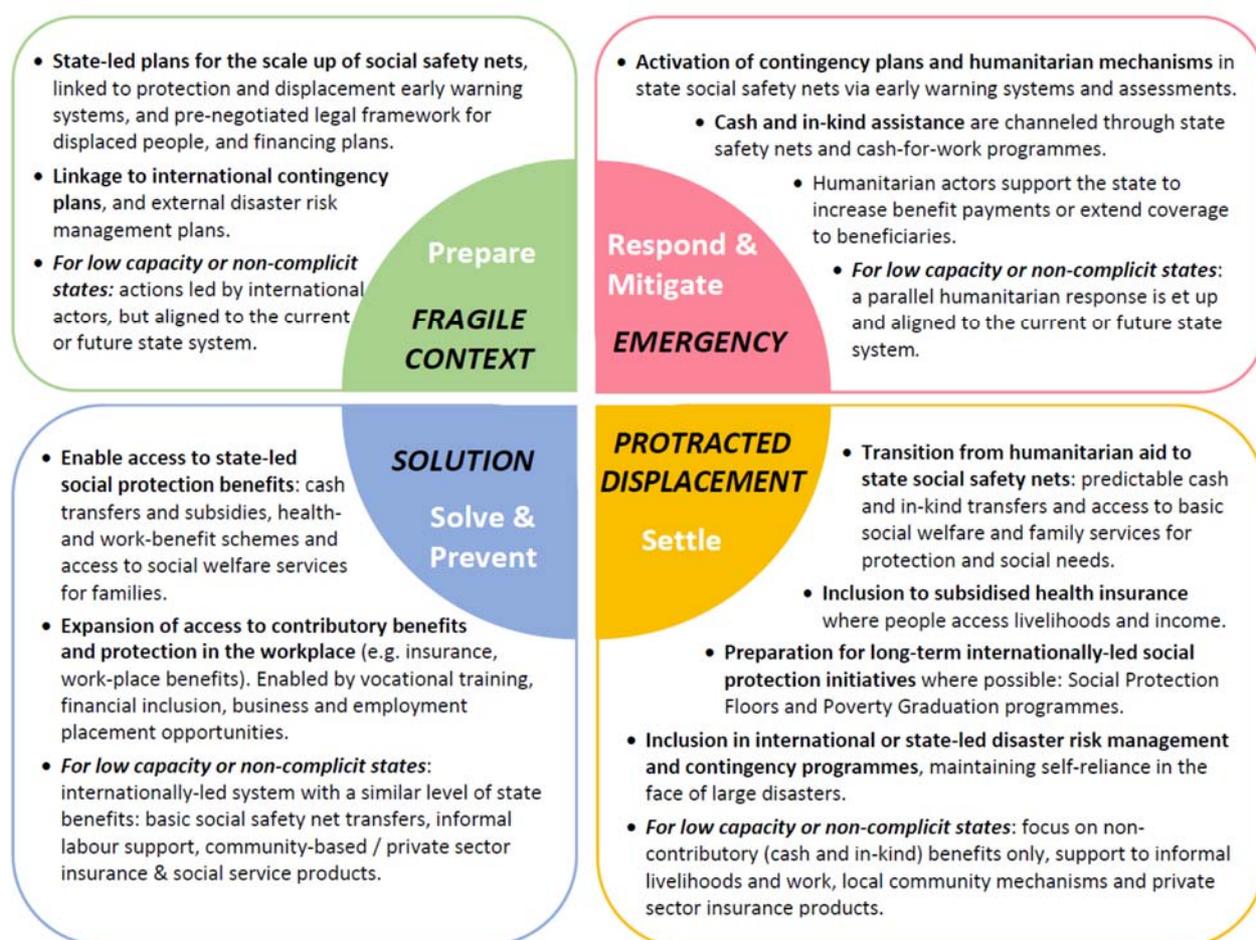


Figure 3: Adapted support linking humanitarian assistance & protection with social protection systems around a typical forced displacement cycle and operational response.

1. The displacement context

Successive waves of displacement means that the displacement context is often cyclical in many countries. A fragile context leads to conflict forcing people to flee from their homes. The resultant emergency often involves humanitarian and protection services supported by the international humanitarian community. Continued conflict or persecution that precludes displaced people returning home leads to protracted displacement, with recent trends pointing to an increasing length of protracted displacement on average. Over time, sustainable solutions are promoted for displaced people, traditionally return, local integration or resettlement, but with other trans-border migration solutions increasingly examined. **Harnessing social protection to better manage forced displacement around this cycle** means:

- Building humanitarian mechanisms into social safety nets and family protection services, before displacement occurs, as part of a larger investment to scale up coverage and benefits for poor host families, backed by development financing and the political leverage of multilateral agencies. Critically, this means putting in place a contingency plan that opens up a timebound access to displaced people to the national system, backed by solid legal framework and a joint host-government and international-actor financing plan.
- During the emergency phase, contingency plans built within the national social safety net are activated (for transfers and services), and humanitarian financing tops up the national system, with internationally led humanitarian operations (and funds) allocated to needs and groups of people that the government cannot or does not cover.
- The transition to government and development programmes starts early on in humanitarian operations where compatibility features are built into those key sectors that overlap with the functions of the

national social protection system. These features include eligibility criteria, management information systems, delivery systems (cash, in-kind and services) and referral processes.

- **An overall transitioning of humanitarian assistance** proceeds according to the needs, capacity and willingness of the government system from:
 - a. Internationally-led humanitarian assistance and protection services parallel to national systems.
 - b. Compatibility features built within the humanitarian response including a shift to the monetization of aid, where possible. This *aligns* the humanitarian response to the national social protection system. This is complemented by scaling up the capacity and outreach of national social protection programmes backed by development financing, preparing the way for inclusion of humanitarian caseloads.
 - c. An initial package of common targeting, management information systems, and delivery systems allows joint programming and funding for both poor host and displaced families, even though refugees and asylum seekers may not be formally included into the national system.
 - d. A progressive transition and referral of humanitarian assistance and protection services to the national social protection system is based on an area-based approach that matches the needs of both displaced and poor host families with the capacity and coverage of international (initially humanitarian managed by humanitarian actors) and government programmes. This provides a timebound planning for transition between humanitarian, stabilization and development (including poverty-reduction) actions and associated lines of finance.

2. Maturity and coverage of national social protection system

The transition process and how referrals are made between humanitarian and longer-term systems are also largely dependent on the maturity and functioning of the national social protection system. Ideally, where many of the social protection components are functioning, this means a successive transfer from:

- Humanitarian cash and in-kind support to national social safety net grants and subsidies.
- Complementary support of cash- and in-kind support via cash-for-work programming and basic livelihoods support aiming for short-term income gains.
- Humanitarian-led protection services to family and protection-related social welfare services (child protection, violence against women, family support), also linked to access to health and education.
- The evolution of cash-for-work to longer-term public works programmes and more advanced livelihoods that offer vocational/business training and open up opportunities to longer-term employment opportunities.
- Progressive access to health insurance and decent workplace conditions and benefits as families are increasingly able to pay into national systems.
- An overall responsible support to informal labour opportunities (that do not compromise access of poor host workers) for displaced people, and the progressive conversion to formal labour opportunities, using cooperatives, worker groups and other structures to facilitate this conversion.

This transition progressively builds the autonomy and self-reliance of forcibly displaced people, who, at some stage, must be able to contribute to national systems and the local economy, in order to incentivize host government to consider them in national and development social protection programmes. This overall transition requires joint preparation efforts and action from humanitarian actors who prepare an enabling environment for longer-term development programmes to reach displaced families, and from development actors who work to prepare national systems to better consider displaced families alongside host families. **This bi-directional support for transition requires both humanitarian and development expertise and financing, beyond the current focus on securing an exit strategy for humanitarian cash.**

3. The legal framework and application of policy

Ultimately, the legal framework and application of national policies regulate real access of displaced people to national social protection programmes. Whilst legal and international protection instruments work for the recognition and acquisition of rights for forcibly displaced people, complementary efforts including investment in social protection mechanisms work to ensure that these people *actually get to enjoy these rights*. Hence the protection role of international actors both ensures rights *and* accompanies people to enjoy these rights. As outlined above, the social protection system is one of the most strategic national systems that can be harnessed to accompany people to enjoy a set of rights.

International support to forcibly displaced people using social protection, particularly for protracted displacement contexts, needs to always consider how access is regulated by the government. **Adapting operational support may include a progressive sequencing as government willingness to consider forcibly displaced people in their national systems opens up** aided by international efforts to incentivize host governments, including:

- **A completely parallel and internationally-supported social protection system**, which builds as many compatibility features with the national programmes, supported by efforts to reinforce proven locally-led and informal social protection mechanisms. These efforts align internationally-supported system to the national system, but does not yet facilitate the referral of forcibly displaced people.
- **Informal mechanisms are mapped and supported** by community-based protection programmes and community-based development programmes. This includes local safety nets led by religious authorities, communities and extended families, informal labour markets or user/producer groups, and pro-poor private sector products such as microcredit, microinsurance and cooperatives.
- **Timebound access to social safety nets** backed by international subsidization of transfers and services, complemented by international efforts for financial inclusion, livelihoods, informal labour support to boost the autonomy and means for forcibly displaced people to contribute.
- **The progressive referral of displaced people to national social protection programmes** backed by a joint government international actor roadmap and a joint financing plan that both shares the financial burden and works to generate new funding and revenue for the government.