

Social Safety Nets in the Joint FAO, UNICEF and WFP Resilience Strategy for Somalia

The Joint UN Resilience Strategy, led by FAO, UNICEF and WFP, includes 'social safety nets' (SSN) as one of the pillars which contribute to improving resilience. The other two pillars are; productive assets and access to basic services. The objective of this working paper is to clarify how all three agencies contribute jointly to building social safety nets in the resilience programme; it has been drafted by UNICEF Somalia in December 2013.

Under the Resilience Strategy, the Social Safety Nets pillar is defined as follows:

Promote predictable safety nets to sustain the basic needs of the chronically-at risk / destitute (minimum social protection)

*This entails moving beyond the current norm of discontinuous cycles of short-term assistance to approaches that build resilience by **providing a predictable level of assistance** to those suffering from **long-term destitution** and to households that are **seasonally at risk** on a recurrent basis. Based on a thorough understanding of the diverse and multidimensional risks faced by households and communities, predictable safety nets will be designed to respond to these risks and promote equity. This floor in well-being provided by predictable safety nets enables households to take on prudent risks such as new income generating activities and enables them to maintain and build human capital through access to basic services.¹*

Under the Resilience Strategy, all three agencies can be viewed as already contributing to the pillar of social safety nets, through the following activities:

- **WFP:** Cash and Voucher Programme which improves access to food during periods of seasonal vulnerability.
- **FAO:** the Cash For Work programme (public works, conditional cash programme) which both builds community assets and improves access to food and non-food items during periods of seasonal vulnerability.
- **UNICEF:** Cash Transfer Programme, which improves access to food, non-food items and basic services through the provision of unconditional cash or voucher transfers during periods of seasonal vulnerability.

For UNICEF and WFP, though there are many similarities in the approach to safety nets in the Resilience Strategy – for example both are unconditional – there are also some fundamental differences. It is important to note that WFP's objective is to improve access to food, particularly at times of seasonal vulnerability, whilst UNICEF's objective is to improve access to food *and* access to basic services, both at times of seasonal vulnerability *and* for chronically vulnerable populations that may require support throughout the year. However, despite the apparent differences in objectives and targeted populations, it is clear that any social transfer to a household - be it of food, vouchers, or cash - will increase the overall income of that household (and of the wider community) and is therefore likely to have knock-on positive outcomes in terms of access to

¹ *Building Resilience in Somalia, Phase 1 Impact Evaluation Dolow District*, September 2013, Semplici and D'Errico, pg. 15

services, productive assets, debt repayment, sharing and reciprocal social networks, etc. Seen in this light, the impact of the two agencies' work on social safety nets may well produce similar outcomes in terms of building resilience.

More evidence is necessary to assess how the modality itself (food / vouchers / conditional cash / unconditional cash) may impact differently on outcomes at community, household and individual level.

Selection / targeting criteria: in order to improve complementarity and to avoid duplication/overlap between the three UN agencies in terms of selected populations, it is recommended that a set of agreed targeting or selection criteria are agreed upon among the organisations (and with the authorities). These criteria would be based on key vulnerabilities such as food insecurity, poverty, nutrition indicators, etc. thereby enabling both WFP and UNICEF to deliver transfers (whether in-kind or cash) within the same framework, but in different geographical areas (or to different population groups). Future collaboration between the three agencies on the social safety nets pillar will be defined in detail in 2014.

Building resilience through predictable social transfers

Design and implementation of a pilot Social Transfer Programme

UNICEF Resilience Definition: 'The ability of children, communities and systems to withstand, adapt and recover from stresses and shocks, advancing the rights of every child, with special attention to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.'²

This section outlines how UNICEF will support the implementation of a Social Transfer³ Programme across Somalia, in line with the social safety net pillar of the Resilience Strategy. This will be further refined and agreed upon through the process of developing the Social Protection Framework, at national and regional level, in 2014. The strategy here therefore provides a suggested approach, but is by no means definitive.

UNICEF and Social Safety Nets

The UNICEF Global Social Protection Strategic Framework states the following 'the term 'social safety nets' is often used in relation to social protection and social transfers, although not always to mean the same thing. There is an emerging consensus that safety nets refer to non-contributory and publicly financed transfers, including conditional and unconditional, cash and in-kind and public works programmes. However, there are still some important differences in definitions, particularly in relation to whether safety nets are poverty-targeted and whether they encompass long-term predictable measures or only more temporary programmes. In the absence of a consensus, **UNICEF uses the term 'social safety nets' to refer to temporary or short-term programmes and 'social transfers' as the broader set of transfers that are only one component of social protection.**' (pg. 30)

² See *UNICEF and Resilience, Global Paper*, 23rd July 2013, pg. 3

³ 'Social Transfers' provide predictable support to households, enabling them to manage their spending and build up productive assets in times of relative stability, whilst also helping to meet immediate needs and access basic services. In times of hardship, social transfers can reduce negative coping mechanism such as the need to sell assets, to migrate in search of work, pulling children out of school, decreasing numbers of meals/day for children, etc. thereby contributing to communities' economic resilience, particularly to climate-related shocks.

Joint Resilience Strategy and UNICEF's approach: While the FAO/WFP/UNICEF Resilience Strategy views the Social Safety Net pillar as providing *predictable support* and moving *beyond short-term assistance* (with a 4-year programme plan for Resilience), UNICEF in general views social safety nets as still providing relatively *temporary or short-term* interventions. The time-frame (i.e. the regularity of re-targeting) remains to be defined under the Resilience Strategy, but UNICEF's social transfers will be a core contributing component. The term 'social transfers' will be used here and should be understood as contributing to the Social Safety Net pillar of the joint Resilience Strategy.

National ownership of social protection: due to differing conditions in all three zones, a slightly different approach will be taken in each:

1. **Central South Somalia:** while UNICEF supports national ownership of social protection, it is understood that, in central south Somalia, a transitional strategy is necessary in the short to mid-term. NGOs and communities will therefore continue to implement the Pilot Social Transfer Programme, with a longer-term exit strategy to handover to national government, when conditions permit. This Social Transfer Programme is also likely to be a core component of the Social Protection Framework, which will be developed with the Government. It is therefore proposed that UNICEF supports an initial *social transfer pilot* in two regions of Central South Somalia (approximately 25,000 households) for a period of 2 years, covering most vulnerable households.⁴ Specific design (targeting, social transfer modality/modalities, benefit size and M&E framework) will be developed based on priorities identified in the Social Protection Framework. Based on results and evaluations of the pilot and building on the experience of the emergency programme, expansion of the programme to additional districts will be considered, linkages with other services, as well as the feasibility of government ownership and management. UNICEF at the CSZ will also support the upstream work with the FGS.
2. **Puntland:** the Government has shown a commitment to social protection and the development of a social transfers programme, through PASWE.⁵ An assessment of this existing programme is planned for January 2014. UNICEF's role in Puntland is different to its role in central south Somalia; social transfer programmes are led and implemented by the local authorities while UNICEF could provide technical support in terms of:
 - Targeting processes (transparency of criteria, community-based targeting mechanisms)
 - Processes for verification of beneficiary lists (limiting inclusion and exclusion errors)
 - Monitoring and evaluation, to build an evidence-base around the impact of the programme
 - Setting up feedback and grievance mechanisms
 - Financial accountability
 - Improving delivery mechanisms (including exploring the use of mobile phones to deliver transfers)
 - Costing exercises, to support models for scaling-up
 - Supporting advocacy for Public Financing for Children, within government budgeting processes.

⁴ As per the ERP, this pilot will have an estimated cost of \$20 million USD

⁵ In line with the Puntland President's commitment to a social welfare programme, PASWE has begun implementing a cash transfer programme for 1115 vulnerable families in all eight regions of Puntland. The households receive a monthly cash transfer of \$30 USD, which aims to support families to meet their basic needs and improve their access to services.

3. **Somaliland:** the situation with regard to a possible social transfer programme in Somaliland has not yet been assessed, but it is expected that UNICEF's support will be of a similar form to the planned support in Puntland (as above). The objective is that social transfer programmes in all three zones will be in-line with the national Social Protection Framework.

Social Transfer delivery mechanisms: building on the experience of the emergency response, safe and secure delivery mechanisms are available for the implementation of a social transfer programme in Somalia. Two delivery mechanisms have so far been used:

- **Mobile Money:** in urban areas (and increasingly some rural areas) NGO partners are working with mobile phone companies to transfer cash electronically. The use of electronic transfers (or e-transfers⁶) has a number of advantages – secure and rapid transactions, a database of beneficiary telephone numbers for monitoring purposes, the use of sms for communicating entitlements (or other information) to beneficiaries and collecting feedback, data which can track grant expenditure, etc. UNICEF strongly supports the expanding use of e-transfers, where possible in terms of mobile phone coverage, facilities for charging phones, acceptability by local communities, protection issues (that the elderly, disabled, illiterate, etc. are not excluded).
- **Hawala money transfer companies:** In rural areas, Somalia money transfer companies (*hawala*) still have the widest reach and continue to be the most adapted transfer mechanism for cash grants.

Whether e-transfers or hawala are used as delivery mechanisms, targeting and monitoring will continue to be conducted by NGO partners, with additional independent 3rd party monitoring (the delivery mechanisms outlined here are also applicable for the emergency response section, below).

Risk Analysis:

There are many risks in reaching the most vulnerable households, such as the risk of inclusion / exclusion errors (when targeting occurs at community level), risk of irregular taxation by local authorities, risk of increasing jealousy and tension a community (between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries), risk of fraud by NGO staff themselves, risk of not being able to access areas for programme implementation and monitoring. These risks must be weighed up against the continuing humanitarian needs and past experience that shows that access and community acceptance is possible even in the most dangerous areas, providing that quality programming is implemented in a participatory and transparent manner. Furthermore, the use of e-transfers improves the security of the delivery of cash and monitoring systems are in place to track project processes and impact from targeting phase, through implementation.

Scaling up emergency responses, scaling down: The development of a large-scale social transfer programme (particularly one that uses e-transfers) could also facilitate the creation of a basic database of beneficiaries; i.e. moving towards a single beneficiary register. This is a key building block in a comprehensive social protection system. In the event of a necessary emergency response and the need to rapidly scale-up the cash-based intervention, this database could also facilitate the fast delivery of transfers to those beneficiaries already registered. This was one of the key lessons following the delayed famine response in 2011; although a number of interventions were already in place in the Horn of Africa, such as the DFID-funded Hunger and Safety Net Programme in Northern Kenya, none of these interventions enabled rapid scale-up. Rather a new

⁶ E-transfers refers the delivery of cash transfers via electronic means – this can be via a card-based system (like a debit card) or via credit on mobile phones, i.e. mobile money.

round of targeting was necessary in order to respond to the crisis.⁷ Preparedness and contingency planning for emergency response is explored further in 4.2, below.

Expected output: chronically vulnerable children and families across Somalia have improved access to food and non-food commodities, as well as access to essential services, through the receipt of social transfers at times of seasonal vulnerability (or throughout the year). This social transfer programme will be in line with the national Social Protection Framework.

Emergency preparedness and response through unconditional cash transfers

This section outlines how UNICEF proposes to continue using unconditional cash transfers as a flexible emergency response, particularly in central south Somalia.

Since the crisis of the 2011 famine, emergency cash transfers⁸ (which include cash grants and food / commodity vouchers) have proved⁹ to be an effective mechanism to support poorer households through periods of seasonal vulnerability. As one of the tools of social protection, emergency unconditional cash transfers can be a lifesaving intervention, as well as lessening the likelihood that families will resort to negative coping mechanisms, such as reducing the number of meals eaten per day; reducing dietary diversity or eating less high-value foods; depletion of productive assets; migration for work; loss of access to credit, etc. Many of these coping mechanisms have an adverse impact on the health, nutrition and well-being of children. Cash transfers, even in an emergency context, have also shown to improve access to basic services that contribute to positive outcomes for children, including health, education, shelter, protection, and so forth.

Somalia continues to be affected by both slow-onset (drought) and rapid-onset (floods, cyclones) emergencies. However, from year to year, different geographical areas and different livelihood or population groups are more seriously affected by such emergencies, than others. The flexible programming approach proposed here enables the most vulnerable families to be targeted, for an average of 3-4 monthly transfers per year.

- **Vulnerability related to food insecurity:** priority will be given to the seasonal periods of greatest hardship (i.e. prior to the *Deyr* and *Gu* harvests). With regards to food insecurity, re-targeting will be conducted each season, so that the same geographical areas will not necessarily be targeted, but cash transfers will be used to *prevent* extreme food insecurity, focusing on emergency areas where the greatest vulnerabilities are (based primarily on FSNAU data). Even if the same geographical areas do demonstrate recurring food insecurity, within those areas, community-based re-targeting at local level will still be conducted, meaning that the same families are not necessarily the recipients of the cash transfers, year after year.

⁷ In learning from this experience, DFID has now funded a single beneficiary register for the HSNP programme, in which every household in the ASAL region is now targeted. This should enable rapid and cost-efficient scale up in the event of a future crisis.

⁸ 'Cash transfer programming' is a term used here to refer to both cash grants and commodity vouchers (for food and water). All cash transfers supported by UNICEF in Somalia are unconditional.

⁹ The evidence from the Humanitarian Outcomes Evaluation (2013) suggests that 'cash and vouchers made a quantifiable difference in reducing hunger and improving food security, enabling a more rapid recovery than would have been possible without assistance' (page 5).

- **Vulnerability related to rapid-onset disasters:** for other types of disasters, such as floods or cyclones, these may happen at unpredictable times of the year. Targeting will therefore have to be done in response to such a disaster, it cannot be preventative.

In its overall social protection strategy, UNICEF is working on transitioning from the emergency post-famine response towards predictable safety nets for South Central Somalia. However, this more flexible emergency approach will respond to urgent needs as indicated above, and is therefore the ‘crisis modifier’ or ‘surge capacity’ part of the wider safety net and social protection strategy. This flexible mechanism is an integral part of the overall social protection strategy but differs from the safety net approach in a number of ways:

- **Duration of support:** re-targeting is more frequent for the emergency programme and the length of support is shorter (probably 3-4 months), whereas the safety net programme will provide support for a minimum of 2 years.
- **Transfer amount:** the amounts for the emergency response are likely to be higher (as needs per household will be greater) than for the social transfers programme (where the transfer supplements the households’ income)
- **Targeting criteria:** in an emergency response targeting should be blanket, at least for a short period of time (3-6 months).¹⁰ Targeting criteria for the social transfers programme are yet to be defined, but will likely be based on categorical or poverty-related criteria.

Emergency Preparedness in Social Protection

In order to respond in a flexible manner to emergencies, UNICEF must link its wider social protection approach with a flexible emergency response (surge capacity). Two elements are essential:

- **System of surveillance with clear triggers and accountabilities,** must be in place. This may be established under the Humanitarian Country Team and linked to a decision-making process which defines who is responsible to take what decisions, in response to which early warning signs.
- **Preparedness must be maintained,** including: UNICEF/partner relationships, NGO partner capacity (regular training), risk mitigation measures, up-to-date delivery mechanisms for cash transfers, databases with key vulnerability beneficiary criteria, available and flexible funding, coordination mechanisms.

For all types of emergencies (especially slow-onset), it is essential to identify and agree upon the triggers and accountabilities for activating or re-activating this type of emergency response. Similarly, it is important to clarify exit strategies, i.e. when UNICEF will transition to other longer-term programmes, such as resilience or social safety net type programmes (as outlined above). When triggers and conditions for exit strategies are identified in advance, it will enable quicker decision-making by UNICEF and a rapid emergency response. The triggers and conditions should be reviewed regularly; the table below indicates some suggestions:

¹⁰ This was one of the key recommendations of the *Evaluation of the Emergency Cash and Voucher Programme, 2011-12*, conducted by Humanitarian Outcomes, 2013.

Triggers for Emergency Response	Necessary Conditions to Transition to Longer-Term Safety Net Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FSNAU/IPC classification deteriorating to phase 3 or 4 in area of intervention. - Declaration of emergency by clusters, OCHA, HC/RC, etc. - New displacement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FSNAU/IPC classification returns to phase 3 in area of intervention - Livelihoods supported (less than 50% of unconditional grants spent on food?) - Populations envisage durable solutions to displacement (returns, reintegration, reinstallation) - Populations' perceptions of the longer-term (keen to invest) - Local authorities in place - Social cohesion (reduced conflict, leaders resume traditional authority)

Selection / Targeting approach: beneficiary households are selected and registered by NGO partners, with support, oversight and monitoring by UNICEF. The selection process builds on the lessons learnt from the famine response. The following criteria guide selection process:

- **Geographical targeting:** focusing on populations in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and Emergency (IPC Phase 4) with reference to FSNAU food security analyses and in coordination with the Food Security Cluster's gap analysis, OR based on an emergency declaration by the HC;
- **Community based targeting:** at local level, led by community leaders and NGO staff. Chronically vulnerable households, including those that lack productive labour force (may include female-headed households, families with a high number of dependent children, the elderly, those affected by disability, etc.

Expected output: at risk households have improved access to food and non-food commodities, as well as access to essential services, through the receipt of unconditional cash transfers at times of seasonal vulnerability or in response to a rapid onset emergency.