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International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth

United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund

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MINISTRY OF
ECONOMY



Social Protection Workshop

Khartoum, 31 October 2018

Published in 2019

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BACKGROUND

The Government of Sudan has recognised the importance of a well-consolidated social protection system in the fight against poverty and to raise the living standards of the Sudanese population. Despite increased efforts, poverty levels remain high and the existing social protection system is not yet able to reach all people in need. In addition, the country is currently facing economic challenges that adversely affect the situation of children and families. Technical support and guidance can enhance the government's efforts to scale up the country's social protection programmes, allowing families to manage lifecycle risks and avoid coping mechanisms that could lead to harmful and irreversible consequences for their children.

Against this background, in 2018 UNICEF Sudan launched a new social policy and inclusion programme as part of its four-year country plan. Its overall goal is to support the development and implementation of policies and initiatives that address the structural causes of the multidimensional poverty and inequity affecting children in Sudan's conflict-affected context. It will focus on supporting the government to develop an integrated and child-sensitive social protection system and mobilise strategic partnerships with key social protection actors.

The International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG), a research centre based in Brazil and a partnership between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Brazil, whose aim is to promote knowledge exchange on social policies between countries of the global South, is advising UNICEF Sudan on its role in supporting the government to scale up the country's social protection initiatives. To this end, a team of IPC-IG researchers travelled to Khartoum for one week (from 28 October to 1 November 2018), to meet with key stakeholders and better understand the current social protection system in Sudan, as well as its main bottlenecks.

OBJECTIVE OF WORKSHOP

To identify how UNICEF Sudan might best advise the Ministry of Security and Social Development (MoSSD), on 26 October 2018 UNICEF Sudan and the IPC-IG conducted a one-day workshop with representatives from the Ministry. The main purpose was to familiarise participants with the concepts of comprehensive and child-sensitive social protection and to identify the population's main vulnerabilities based on a life-cycle approach. In addition, the team developed a situation analysis of the country's existing social protection policies and their main gaps to identify the barriers and bottlenecks to a comprehensive social protection system. The results of the workshop will feed into UNICEF Sudan's overarching social protection strategy.

The workshop's **expected outcomes** were:

1. Introduction of key concepts of a comprehensive and child-sensitive social protection system
2. Identification of the main life-cycle related vulnerabilities
3. Recognition and discussion of the main barriers, bottlenecks and gaps to achieving a comprehensive social protection system
4. Develop Suggestions for the Government and, donors to mitigate the barriers and gaps that faced by the sSocial protection system in Sudan



AGENDA

Time	Sessions	Presenters
8:30–9:00	Registration and refreshments	
9:00–9:05	Event opening and welcoming of participants	UNICEF
9:10–9:15	Introduction of participants	All participants
9:15–9:45	Session 1: Social Protection: the case for social protection and UNICEF social protection strategic framework	UNICEF
9:45–10:45	Session 2: IPC-IG mission overview and UNICEF–IPC-IG partnership in the MENA region <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of recent IPC-IG study “Children’s Right to Social Protection in the Middle East and North Africa—An analysis of legal frameworks from a child-rights perspective”; 	IPC-IG
10:45–11:00	break	
11:00–12:15	Session 3: Introduction of the life-cycle approach and situational analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group exercise: Life-cycle vulnerability in Sudan • Early childhood • School-age children • Young people (adolescents and youth) • Women in reproductive age • Working age • Old age 	IPC-IG
12:15–12:30	Presentation of group findings	All participants
12:30–13:15	Prayer and breakfast	
13:15- 14:30	Session 4: Introduction to social protection dimensions: protection, prevention, promotion and transformation (3P1T) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group exercise: Mapping existing social protection initiatives and identifying key gaps, bottlenecks and barriers • Protection • Prevention • Promotion • Transformation 	IPC-IG
14:30–14:45	Presentation of group findings	All
14:45–15:00	Conclusions and closing remarks	IPC-IG and UNICEF

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

SESSION 1: Social Protection: the case for social protection and UNICEF social protection strategic framework

In this session, Ms. Kumiko Imai (UNICEF Sudan) presented **UNICEF’s approach to social protection**. Social protection is one of UNICEF’s key programmatic social policy areas and can be defined as all “public and private policies and programmes aimed at preventing, reducing and eliminating economic and social vulnerabilities to poverty and deprivation”. Social protection comprises **four types of initiatives**:

1. social assistance (non-contributory safety nets, such as cash and in-kind transfers);
2. social insurance (including pensions, health insurance, maternity benefits, etc.);
3. social services (community/home-based care; nurseries; orphanages; refugee camps, etc.); and
4. transformative social equity measures (including revised legal and regulatory frameworks; positive discrimination measures, etc.).

UNICEF's work on social protection is based on **four key principles**:

1. progressive realisation of universal coverage (helping countries identify and progressively expand programmes, policies and financing options);
2. national systems and leadership (supporting nationally-owned and -led systems);
3. gender-inclusive social protection (programme design and implementation to consider existing gender disparities); and
4. social protection in fragile and humanitarian contexts (ideally, sustainable national systems would be used, but a parallel system can be used to provide short-term support).

In addition, the concept of comprehensive social protection (protective, preventive, promotive and transformative—PPPT) was explained. According to this approach, social protection includes four often-interlinked measures. Protective measures provide relief from deprivation, such as social assistance. Preventive measures are those that seek to avert deprivation—such as insurance, while promotive measures aim to enhance capabilities and promote livelihoods. Finally, transformative social protection measures are those that promote social justice, inclusion, equity and non-discrimination.

Another key concept introduced by UNICEF is that of a life-cycle approach to social protection, in which age- and gender-specific risks and vulnerabilities are considered throughout the entire life cycle, including childhood, adolescence, working age and old age. As risks and vulnerabilities vary across each of these groups, so too must policy responses.

The session ended with a summary of crucial messages, including that social protection measures are key in realising children's rights and in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It was also emphasised that social protection needs to tackle both the economic and social dimensions of vulnerabilities based on a life-cycle and PPPT approach to achieve comprehensive social protection floors.

SESSION 2: IPC-IG mission overview and UNICEF–IPC-IG partnership in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region

After Ms. Imai's introductory presentation, IPC-IG researchers Anna Carolina Machado and Pedro Arruda provided an **overview of the mission** and presented the **IPC-IG's work in the MENA region**. In 2017, the IPC-IG partnered with the UNICEF MENA Regional Office (MENARO) to support the production of knowledge in the field of social protection and provide policy analysis in all 20 countries in the region¹. The Centre also provides on-demand remote (and on-site for some selected cases) technical support to all UNICEF Country Offices in the region, including UNICEF Sudan.

During the morning section, Ms. Machado presented the findings of a recently-released study, "[Children's Right to Social Protection in the Middle East and North Africa \(MENA\) Region—an Analysis of Legal Frameworks from a Child Rights Perspective](#)". This report analyses the existing legal frameworks promoting children's right to social protection in the region and the extent to which the region's legal frameworks comply with a human rights-based approach to social protection. **Social protection is a human right**, established in several human rights treaties. As such, it should be considered as more than just a matter of charity or of policy choice; according to this principle, everyone—including children—have an inalienable right to social protection.

However, to consolidate social protection as a right it is crucial for policies and programmes to be embedded in comprehensive legal frameworks. The study shows that this is often not the case in MENA. Some of the region's main cash transfer programmes for families with children are not yet anchored in legislation. It further points out that while some legal frameworks are relatively comprehensive (such as Iraq's Social Protection Law of 2014), many lack provisions for important features, such as clear complaints and grievances mechanisms or other channels for citizen participation.

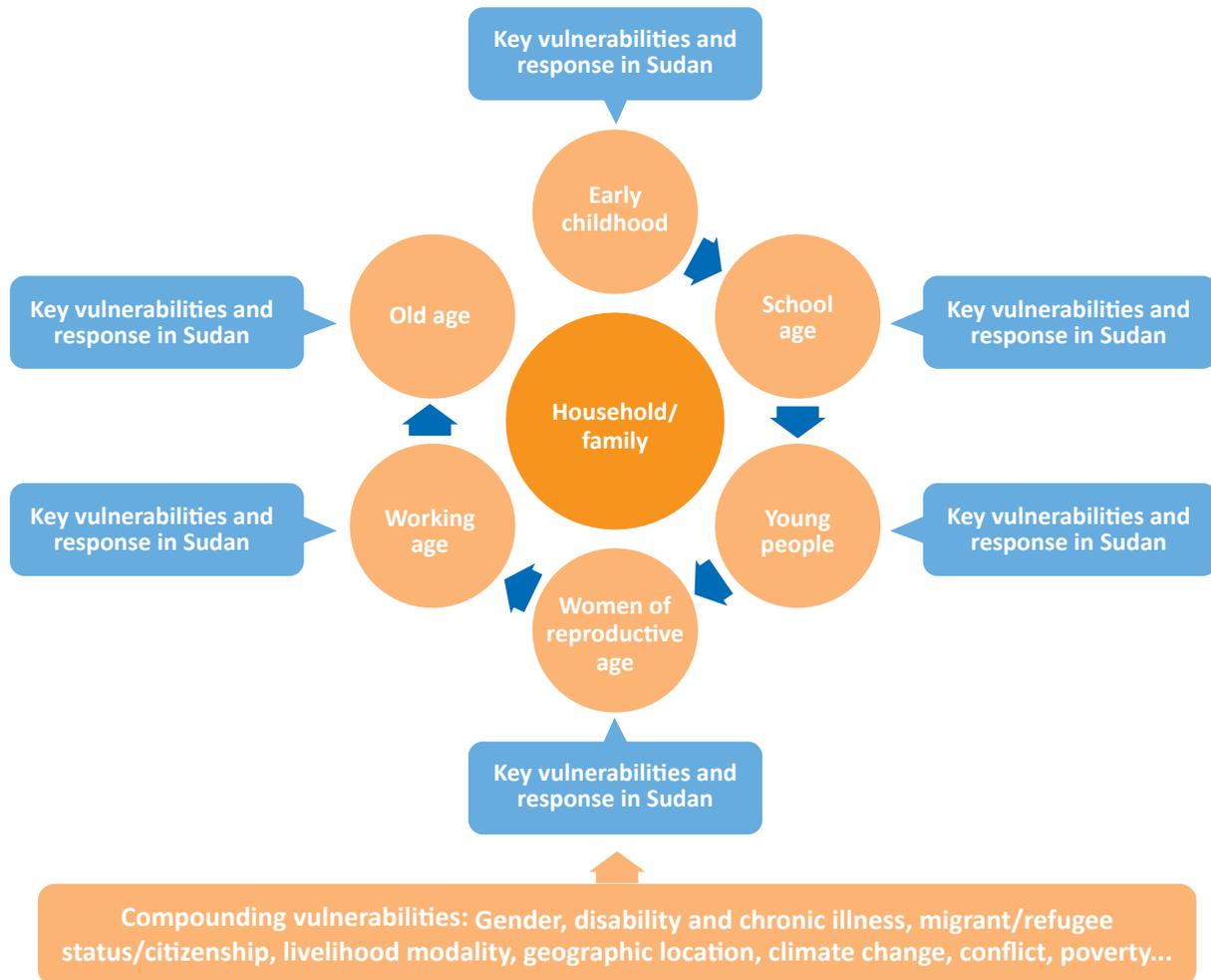
SESSION 3: Group exercise: Life-cycle vulnerability in Sudan

The two group sessions were moderated by IPC-IG researchers Rafael Osorio, Anna Carolina Machado and Pedro Arruda. Following a life-cycle approach to social protection, the goals of these activities were: (i) to identify the main vulnerabilities to social and economic shocks for each of the age groups depicted in Figure 1 and (ii) to map the relevant policy responses to such vulnerabilities.

1. According to UNICEF's definition, the MENA region comprises 20 countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Figure 1

Group exercise: Life-cycle vulnerability and response in Sudan



Early childhood

Some of the key vulnerabilities mentioned for children under 5 years old were malnutrition and poor health—topics that are also crucial to the SDG agenda. Under-5 child mortality rates remain high, especially in conflict-affected communities. Some children are still not fully vaccinated, and it was noted by participants that health services remain poor in some areas. In addition, quality nurseries are often missing. It was further noted that many children suffer from orphan hood and from the consequences of drug abuse and crime.

School-age children

Poor health and malnutrition were mentioned as the major factors affecting school-age children. The inadequacy of health services, especially regarding vaccination and access to primary health care were raised as points of attention. In addition, schools are not available in all areas, hindering children's access to education. This is particularly the case in rural areas, where children often must travel long distances to reach schools. Moreover, the school environment and infrastructure, including sanitation services, is often inadequate and children are exposed to violence. The necessary psychological and social services are often missing. Other key challenges mentioned were high drop-out rates and early marriage, which limits girls' access to education. Conflict in vulnerable areas and internal displacement, as well as migration from other countries, further strain public services. Finally, family break-ups were said to negatively affect children.

Youth and people of working-age ²

One of the main vulnerabilities faced by youth and people of working age is the lack of employment. Lack of access to land, capital ownership and capacity-building centres, as well as an inadequate educational system, were mentioned as the main factors contributing to high levels of unemployment. Many people are forced to migrate from rural to urban areas or even away from Sudan. Moreover, many work in inappropriate environments in the informal sector, lacking access to any form of social protection. The situation was reported to have worsened in 2018 due to the country's economic deterioration, which has led to an increase in people working in marginalised activities. Conflict and displacement further limit the possibilities of the youth. People with disabilities are particularly affected by limited opportunities. Another challenge relates to the weakening of traditional norms and values, leading to drug use and abusive, negative use of social media.

Elderly people

Workshop participants noted that elderly people are particularly affected by poverty and malnutrition. Moreover, many do not have access to any form of pension as they have never worked in the formal sector, and benefits paid in the existing pension systems are frequently considered very low and insufficient to cover basic family expenses. Internal migration has put additional pressure on households, especially on those headed by elderly women. In addition, elderly people often suffer from limited accessibility to services—including social care centres—and poor infrastructure. Moreover, lack of enforcement of existing laws was mentioned as another critical point affecting the elderly.

Women in reproductive age

Women in Sudan face multiple vulnerabilities and are exposed to major risks, including malnutrition, violence, exploitation and exposure to hazardous working environments, especially in the informal sector. Women-headed households are particularly vulnerable. In addition, women are severely affected by gaps in primary health care. Consequently, maternal mortality rates remain high. Communication materials for primary health care services are often not available and breastfeeding awareness is generally low. Many women are also affected by HIV/AIDS and, due to customs and traditions, many women are married off early and are victims of female genital mutilation. It was also mentioned that women who are divorced experience stigma and that there is a high demand for social assistance centres.

SESSION 4: Group work: Mapping existing social protection initiatives and identifying key gaps, bottlenecks and barriers

A comprehensive approach to social protection requires protective, preventive, promotive and transformative measures. The objective of the second group exercise was to map existing social protection initiatives and identify key gaps, bottlenecks and barriers for each age group, following the life-cycle approach. In all workshop activities, the role of the family and local communities in supporting people living in extreme poverty was emphasised. Despite the relevance of government efforts in providing social protection programmes and policies to improve poor people's livelihoods, a comprehensive understanding of social protection in Sudan must recognise the importance of the support provided by, within and among families.

With this in mind, group discussions were centred on the role of government-provided social protection policies and programmes. Three working groups were organised, and members were asked to discuss the existing policy responses to the social vulnerabilities identified in the first activity, as well as the key gaps and challenges to enhance the current social protection system in Sudan. The main aspects of the discussion are summarised as follows, according to the age-group framework that guided the debate.

Early childhood

The Government of Sudan has enacted several legal instruments concerned with children's rights and introduced the Children's Act in 2010. Moreover, there are national policies for orphaned and homeless children. Vaccination campaigns are being implemented and health services are provided free of charge through the Ministry of Health and the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF). However, one of the main bottlenecks mentioned was that primary health care units are often ill-equipped and some vaccinations (e.g. against measles) remain limited. In the education sector, pre-school services are envisaged, but coverage is very limited due to insufficient resources.

2. Some groups considered working age and young people as the same, therefore they were grouped together here.

School-age children

School meals are offered to school-age children under the Shamil programme (with support from both the World Food Programme and grassroots organisations). The Zakat Chamber plays a relevant role in the provision of social assistance, offering support to families with orphans (in addition to the transfers provided to poor families in general). Also, programmes exist to prevent violence against children in schools, yet they were reported to not be fully implemented yet. Finally, the need to support schools both technically and financially, and to establish vocational schools, were also discussed.

Youth and people of working age

Projects have been implemented to provide financial support and microcredit to graduates and to employ them. The Shamil programme was mentioned as an initiative providing important support to the youth. In addition, a marriage fund provides financial assistance to young couples, as marriage often implies high financial costs. For those suffering from drug addiction, as well as those who are affected by HIV/AIDS, specific policies and care centres exist to provide support. Despite these efforts, participants identified the need to strengthen employment policies and establish training opportunities for the youth to confront the high rates of youth unemployment and improve the living conditions of the underpaid and underqualified labour force working in the informal sector. For those working in the formal sector, a contributory insurance system (National Fund) is in place.

Women

Regarding policies for women, the participants reported that the government is implementing a national policy for women's empowerment as well as the "Man Ahyaha" campaigns, which are sponsored by the Ministry of Health and the MoSSD and aim at reducing maternal and child mortality. Projects for rural women, the national programme for productive families as well as initiatives targeting women in the informal sector have also been implemented. In addition, the Ministry of Health has launched a project to reduce maternal mortality. Still, it was noted by participants that awareness must be raised regarding women's rights and that it is crucial to improve primary health care for women.

Elderly people

A social insurance policy is in place for the elderly, although it is limited to those covered by the Social Insurance Fund and the National Pensions Fund. The recently-expanded National Health Insurance Fund also covers elderly people. A national committee for policies for the elderly, as well as a national day for the elderly, were proposed by the government. Despite increased governmental efforts, participants also identified several gaps, including inadequate resource allocation and a lack of management information systems to provide monitoring mechanisms as well as updated information regarding the emerging problems affecting elderly people. Moreover, health services need to be improved and elderly care centres should be established to better support the population and reduce their socio-economic risks.

Concluding remarks

During the workshop it was noted that the MoSSD serves as an umbrella, offering several social protection mechanisms. In 2011, the Government adopted the Social Initiative Program funded by the Ministry of Finance and implemented by the MoSSD and its agencies. It includes cash transfers, health insurance funds, microfinance and a school feeding programme, among other policy initiatives implemented by specific units within the Ministry (such as the National Council for the Population, the National Council for Childhood Care, the National Council for People with Disabilities and the Humanitarian Aid Commission).

In addition to the Social Initiative Program, the social protection system in Sudan includes micro finance, cash transfers and health insurance as well as the schemes offered by the Zakat Fund, the National Pensions and Social Insurance Fund, and the Saving and Social Development Bank.

Yet, several bottlenecks were identified by the participants. Many pieces of legislation and policies remain weak, and technical and financial support are considered key for the enhancement of the national social protection system in Sudan.

The following main challenges and pathways for the enhancement of the social protection system were identified during the workshop:

- The insufficiency of public resources in the social protection sector was reported as one of the major barriers for the scale-up and the introduction of new programmes to reduce socio-economic vulnerabilities.

Workshop members drew attention to the fact that investments are needed in all parts of the country, and that the enhancement of MoSSD activities relies on a steady stream of investments in the social protection sector.

- Comprehensive datasets on the beneficiaries of social protection programmes and monitoring information systems (MIS) are often lacking, or at a very incipient stage. Technical and institutional support are deemed essential, especially at the local and municipality level to consolidate these areas, and international organisations are recognised as potential and continuous cooperation partners. In this regard, a technical assistance project is being developed in partnership with the World Bank. Further international support projects should be implemented in a coordinated manner.
- International donors and United Nations agencies are key in providing support to the poorest Sudanese families—often living in conflict-affected areas—and for refugees living in the country. Yet, coordination among different actors and with the government itself needs to be improved to avoid duplicate efforts.
- Conflict-affected areas and regions are still not covered by social protection initiatives and often lack basic public services. These areas should be prioritised in the scale-up of programmes financed by the Ministry of Finance, such as the new Shamil programme.
- The establishment of a strong partnership between the MoSSD and national universities was noted as a valid pathway to enhance national capacities in poverty reduction—especially regarding training, knowledge generation and data analysis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enhance coordination within the government to better identify the roles and responsibilities of each institution involved in the provision of social protection—namely the MoSSD and its agencies the Zakat Chamber and the Commission for Social Safety Nets and Poverty Reduction, the National Health Insurance National Fund, and the Saving and Social Development Bank and the National Pensions and Social Insurance Fund.
- Increase investment to investigate alternatives to improve and diversify the financing mechanisms necessary to enhance and scale-up existing social protection programmes.
- Pay special attention to particularly vulnerable groups, especially under-5 children, women and elderly people. Making certain that the life-cycle approach is at the core of policy elaboration and implementation is key in ensuring that the vulnerabilities of individuals and families are addressed according to their specific needs.
- The further development of a MIS is key in formulating policies and identifying priorities for poverty reduction efforts.
- Capacity-strengthening and technical support are two major areas of potential cooperation between international organisations and the Government of Sudan and the MoSSD, if well-coordinated.





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