

Sudan: Design, implementation and child-sensitivity of social protection responses to COVID-19¹

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This One Pager is part of a series based on the report 'Social protection responses to COVID-19 in MENA: Design, implementation and child-sensitivity', developed in partnership by the IPC-IG and UNICEF MENARO (Bilo, Dytz, and Sato 2022). The study reviewed the design and implementation features of the social assistance measures implemented in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region up to the end of March 2021, and the extent to which they took children's needs and vulnerabilities into account.

Sudan has been subjected to many challenges linked to internal conflicts, political transition, economic crisis and natural disasters, among others. In 2020, its gross domestic product (GDP) decreased by 8.4 per cent, and the military coup on 25 October 2021 has caused further socio-economic deterioration. More than 3 million people remain internally displaced, and 1.1 refugees reside in the country (UNHCR 2022), living in harsh conditions inside camps or settlements without being able to meet their basic needs. In 2021, 7.4 million children were in need of humanitarian assistance (UNICEF 2021).

Up to the end of March 2021, the IPC-IG mapping of social protection responses to COVID-19 in the Global South² identified five government-provided responses in Sudan: two social assistance and three labour market interventions. While all three labour market programmes were wage subsidies, the two social assistance responses were as follows.

The emergency cash transfer programme targeted all informal workers who had lost their income due to the pandemic and were living in areas close to markets, shops and ATMs. A one-off payment of SDG3,000 (USD6.70)³ was made to 339,469 poor households across Sudan. Geographical targeting was used in combination with household and community-level targeting. Local committees and the Ministry of Social Development's (MoSD) administrators at the local level were responsible for identifying and registering beneficiaries, whose data was sent to the MoSD for cross-checking with the Civil Registry Database.

The Informal Sector Rapid Response Plan consisted of an emergency in-kind transfer, targeting vulnerable informal workers living in the poorest areas of Khartoum state and without access to bank services. Food baskets to cover informal workers' needs for 3 weeks were prepared by the MoSD, the Zakat Chamber and the World Food Programme (WFP). A total of 504,689 households benefited from this response.

In addition to the government response, the IPC-IG also mapped nine humanitarian interventions⁴ in Sudan, led by WFP, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and UNICEF. These included, for example, the adaptation of the meals provided by the school feeding programme, which were converted by WFP into take-home rations for

children after schools closed. Humanitarian interventions also included four in-kind transfers of food and hygiene packages, as well as three cash transfer programmes. One notable intervention comprised food and cash assistance provided by WFP to children, and pregnant and breastfeeding women.

Based on the criteria used for the IPC-IG/UNICEF MENARO assessment, the two government social assistance measures in Sudan were considered child-sensitive, while seven of the nine humanitarian measures contained child-sensitive elements. This means that they supported children's access to child protection, education, nutrition or health services, increased benefit values with household size and/or directly targeted children.

Based on the analysis of the social assistance responses to COVID-19, some of the key take lessons learned for Sudan in terms of shock-responsive and child-sensitive social protection are the following.

- The one-off emergency programmes had two important elements that should be continued: (i) data collected during the crisis were used to initiate the establishment of a unified social registry; and (ii) bank cards distributed to beneficiaries of the emergency cash transfer are meant to be used for other programmes in the future.
- Sudan should develop more structured social assistance programmes capable of providing regular support over a longer period of time, and not rely solely on emergency or *ad hoc* assistance.
- In a context of multifaceted economic, political and humanitarian crises, humanitarian actors are key to providing support to vulnerable groups. The international community should cooperate to guarantee financial resources for humanitarian actors. Close coordination between government and humanitarian actors will be essential to increase coverage in Sudan.

References:

Bilo, C., J.P. Dytz, and L. Sato. 2022. "Social protection responses to COVID-19 in MENA: Design, implementation and child-sensitivity". *Research Report*, No. 76. Brasília and Amman: International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth and United Nations Children's Fund Middle East and North Africa Regional Office.

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Notes:

1. For the full list of references and a description of all social protection measures mapped, see the full study.
2. See: <<https://socialprotection.org/social-protection-responses-covid-19-global-south>>.
3. Exchange rate as of 8 April 2022.
4. Only cash, in-kind and school feeding measures led by UNICEF, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the International Organization for Migration, UNHCR or WFP were considered in the scope of the study.