Humanitarian Assistance and National Safety Nets

Framing the issues

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Source: Gentilini (2016)
In theory, humanitarian assistance and social protection are complementary...

• Considerable interest and investments in enhancing the scalability of national capacities
  • Part of “adaptive SP” or similar “shock-responsive SP”

• Humanitarian assistance = filling the gap (temporarily) between needs and SP capacity
  • Guided by humanitarian principles and international law
... and humanitarian assistance becoming increasingly cash-based

• In 2016, the volume of humanitarian cash transfers and vouchers topped $2.8B, a 40% increase since 2015

• This dove-tails the increasingly cash-based national safety nets = more opportunities for synergies

Source: CaLP (2018)
... but nearly all humanitarian assistance is provided *outside* national structures

- In a recent survey of humanitarian practitioners (n =375), only 28% reported that “… national/local actors are appropriately involved in the coordination of humanitarian cash transfers”

Share of humanitarian assistance delivered through national government structures

Source: Stoddard (2017) based of FTS data
Why is that?

• Objectives and scope may justify a degree of ‘going parallel’
  • Volatile and chaotic environments posing immediate threats to the lives of affected populations ('humanitarian imperative')
  • Limited implementation capacities and legislation (e.g., refugees)

• Diagnostics and operational protocols
  • International Phase Classification (IPC) and program standards (e.g., Sphere)
  • UN clusters

• When protracted and large-scale, it may generate trade-offs with national structures
  • Risks of doing the same thing (e.g., public works), for same communities, with different parameters (e.g., data collection, targeting methods, wage rates, etc.)
Emerging practical complementarities

• Piloting and transferring models (e.g., Mauritania)

• Common or connected social registries (e.g., Senegal, Kenya)

• Payment platforms (e.g., Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine)

• Top-up of transfers (e.g., Philippines)

• Planning of interventions (e.g., Ethiopia)

• Sequencing of disaster response (e.g., Fiji)

• Providing quality standards (e.g., public works in Mozambique)

• Logistics support (e.g., Ebola crisis)
It is not always black-or-white

• What do we mean by ‘humanitarian assistance’?
  • International (DAC? through UN? Within agencies, there are humanitarian and SP groups...)
  • Domestic (sometimes located outside the SP remit, e.g., disaster authorities)

• What is a ‘national structure’?
  • Source of funding
  • Channel of delivery
  • Implementation

• Combining these elements gives us a basic framework to locate further models...
### Many blend models

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<th>Syria</th>
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<td><strong>Is humanitarian assistance</strong></td>
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<td>funded domestically?</td>
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Questions for our panel

• From your perspective, what issues are emerging from humanitarian assistance in your country or region?

• What may prevent humanitarian system and social protection to be better connected and coordinated?

• How could social protection systems be made more ‘shock-responsive’?