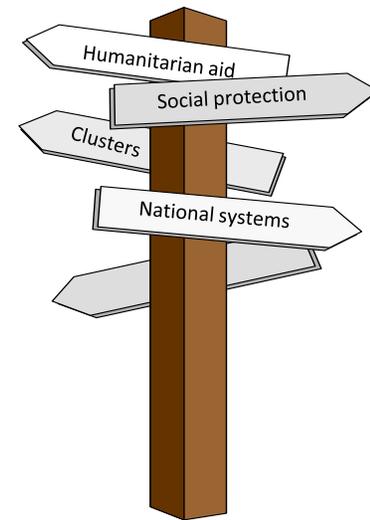# Safety nets and humanitarian assistance: exploring the interactions

Some points for discussion

Ugo Gentilini

Social Safety Nets Core Course (May 6, 2016)

Humanitarian aid

Social protection

Clusters

National systems

Sorting through the hype

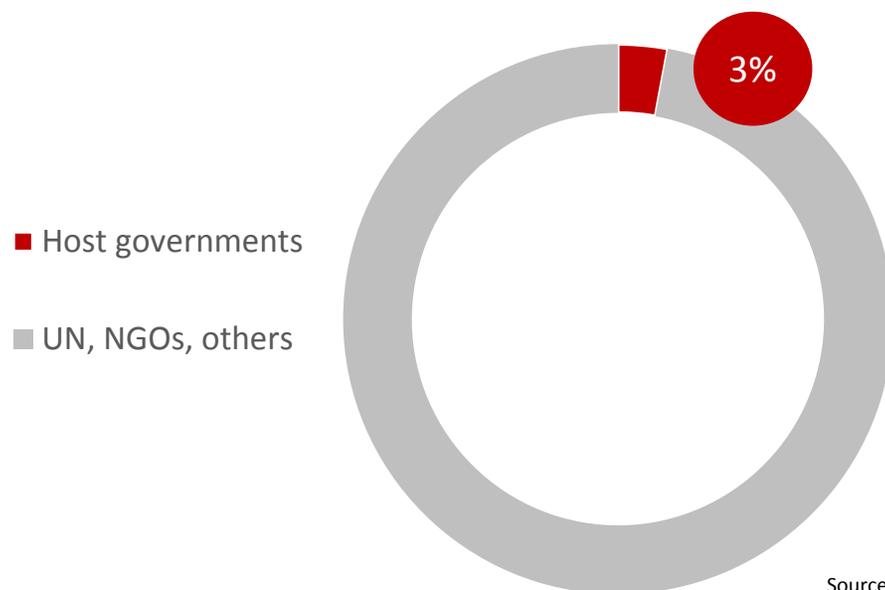# Safety nets vs humanitarian assistance

- Magnitude of crises often exceeds national capacity to manage them

- How are countries filling such gap?
  - More investments in safety nets
  - More immediate humanitarian assistance

Safety nets vs humanitarian assistance: what's different?

- Objectives and purpose

- Design, performance, and metrics

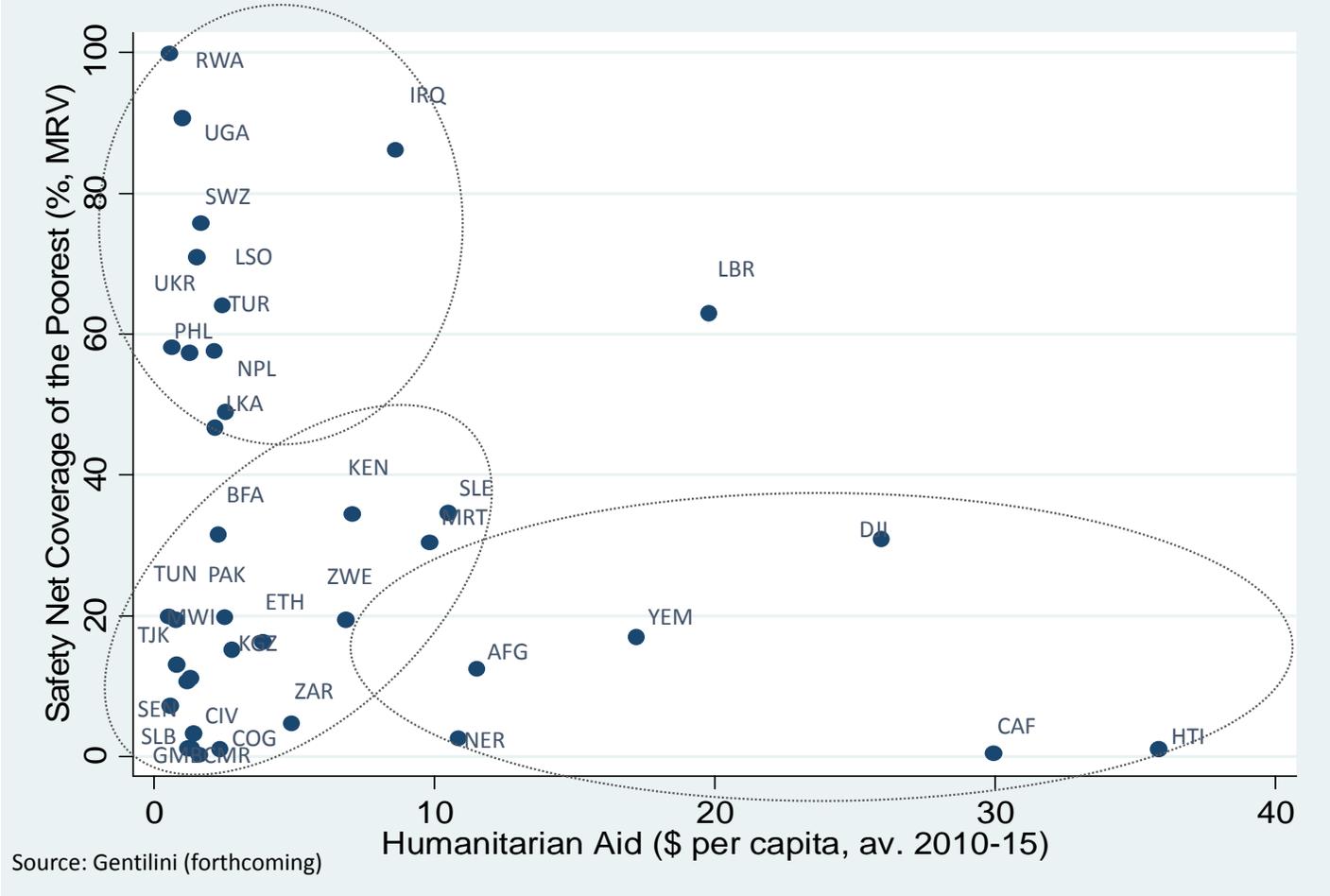- Timeframe

- Role of governments....

A parallel system?

Recipients of humanitarian assistance, 2010-14 (US billion)

- ■ Host governments
- ■ UN, NGOs, others

3%

Source: ALNAP (2015)

… though sometimes for good reasons! (e.g., no state, conflict, speed of response, legislation)

Safety nets vs humanitarian assistance

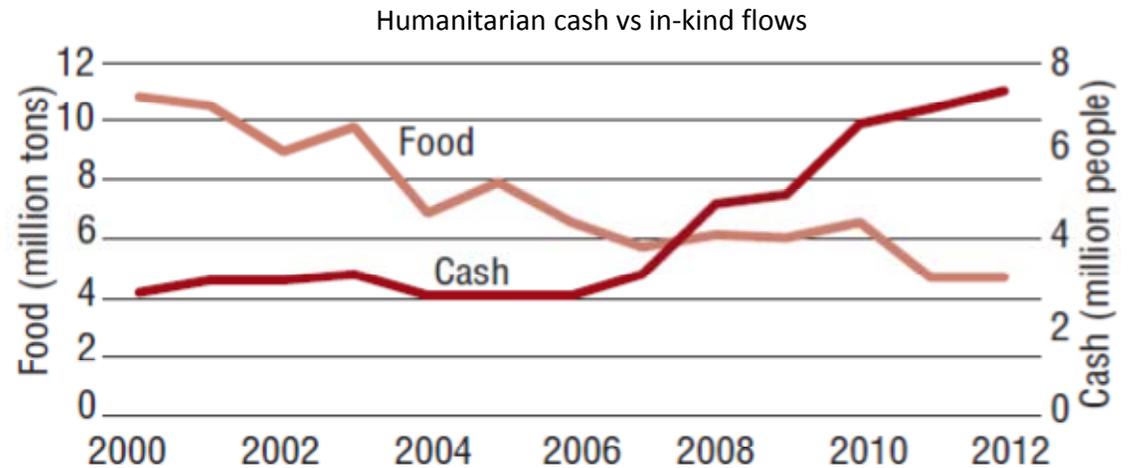Note: Excluded Humanitarian Aid per capita less than $0.5 and greater than $40

Why is it relevant for safety net practitioners?

- **Financing:** donors plan to transfer humanitarian caseloads onto SP systems
    - Some of the current humanitarian functions could be better served by safety nets (others not!)
    - Ethiopia's PSNP as the result of harnessing humanitarian assistance (pre-2004)

- **Operations:** humanitarians may operate in similar communities and using same instruments (e.g., cash) as safety nets…. and often at a larger scale
    - … but different nuts & bolts (targeting methods, counterparts, MIS, M&E…)

More cash, by more actors

Currently…

- $1.2B, 5.6M beneficiaries

- Lebanon: 30 agencies proving cash for 14 objectives

- Yet only 6% of total humanitarian assistance. Big global push to increase that under current "Grand Bargain"

- Plus GiveDirectly, etc.

Humanitarian cash vs in-kind flows

Source: Gentilini (forthcoming)

Ideas in incubation

- <u>Clarify definitions and functions</u>
    - Developing an **operational definition** of 'humanitarian' and 'safety net' programs
    - Chart out the **functions** that are 'purely' humanitarian, and those that are currently performed by humanitarian actors but could, potentially, be undertaken by safety nets
    - Identify the circumstances under which **protracted** humanitarian assistance could hinder national systems development

- <u>Compare alternatives</u>
    - Where functions overlap, examine the **comparative costs** of humanitarian and safety net models for providing assistance to a comparable set of beneficiaries and interventions

- <u>Identify complementarities</u>
    - Examine the conditions under which humanitarian and safety net programs could better **coexist and complement** each other (optimal balance?)
    - Document cases of **joint programming**, including technical specifications and political economy dynamics, as emerging from live case studies

Thanks!

(and three new papers in the pipeline)