

Strengthening nexus coherence and responsiveness of the Palestinian social protection sector

A vital but fragmented Palestinian social protection system

In the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), coverage of social assistance programmes implemented through the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) and humanitarian actors is relatively widespread. Nationally, 40 per cent of all Palestinian households receive at least one type of social protection transfer. Coverage of these initiatives is largest in Gaza, where 35 per cent of households are in receipt of a government benefit, and 70 per cent receive a non-governmental benefit. Importantly, many households often report receiving more than one type of social transfer, reflecting the high levels and multiple forms of deprivations, but also the importance of coordination between government and non-governmental programmes for efficient planning and use of resources.¹

The Palestinian social protection system remains highly dependent upon shrinking external financing and volatile government allocations. Total allocation to the system declined by 25 per cent between 2015 and 2018. Meanwhile, many humanitarian programmes were originally conceived for refugee and other emergencies, which have become structural over time. Today, these programmes make up a significant share of coverage and outlays for social protection. The historical context and on-going conflict has obliged the international community to play a significant role in ensuring the well-being of Palestinians, including Palestine refugees. However, more efforts are needed to better align what are de facto social protection programmes, which ought to be considered as part of the wider social protection system in OPT. Similar efforts are also needed to ensure that Government can coordinate and scale-up social protection activities in response to shocks, assessing emerging needs and prioritizing resources and response efforts quickly, where and when needed.

New efforts to bridge the humanitarian and development divide

For this reason, the Office of the European Union Representative (West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNRWA) is supporting the strengthening of coherence between humanitarian and development activities and to improve the responsiveness in the Palestinian social protection sector during times of crises. A new development cooperation project, implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNICEF and Oxfam will focus on addressing, together with government, other UN agencies and humanitarian partners, the fragmentation of programming, including at the humanitarian-development nexus, and increasing the capacity of MoSD and its partners to quickly leverage social transfers (cash and in-kind) in efforts to respond to emerging needs across Palestinian society.

The overall objective of the project is to assist in the achievement of SDG 1.3, for countries to “implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including [social protection] floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and vulnerable. Specifically, it will i) enhance rights-based and nexus programmatic coherence of the Palestinian social protection sector and ii) increase the responsiveness of the social protection system in times of crisis to support OPT’s progress on SDG 1.3. The project will generate the necessary outputs towards the achievement those specific objectives.

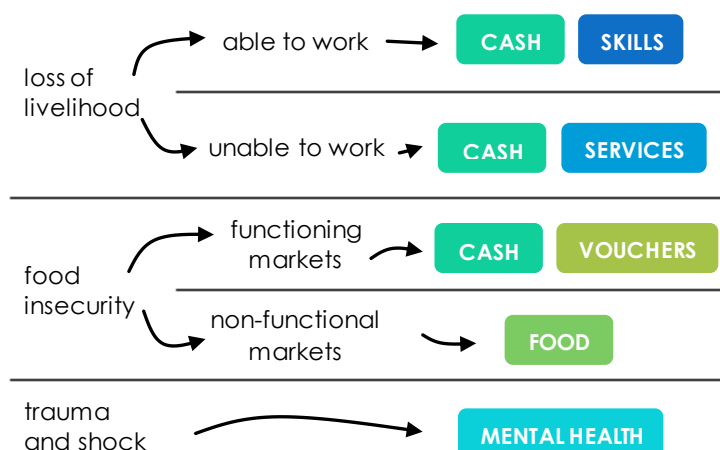
¹ 2021, ILO. ILO Social Protection Floor Assessment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Beirut

1. Promoting a whole-of-sector approach to coordination, planning and financing.

The project provides government and non-governmental social protection actors a complete perspective on the state of play, to encourage and inform a coordinated division of labour that can more efficiently programme limited social protection resources, including through outputs such as:

- A complete mapping of interventions
- Fora for information and data sharing
- Analysis of critical gaps and overlaps
- A joint programmatic and financing framework

Optimizing the support mix by combining benefits in common ways, across providers.



Cross-sector analysis and coordination for progressive distribution of support.



2. Ensuring fitness for purpose and facilitating administration.

Often the types and levels of support depend not only on individual circumstances, but also on benefit providers. The project will work to ensure harmonization of the approaches and tools used across various actors, while reducing the complexity experienced by beneficiaries and applicants the social protection administration. Outputs:

- Recommendations for adopting common processes (assessments, transfer modalities, etc.)
- Support for shared administrative tools, entry points into the system

3. Improving crisis preparedness and social protection responses.

Assessing needs emerging from crises, identifying and registering those affected, and deciding how best to respond requires planning and coordination. The project works to improve how government and partners can intelligently leverage the social protection system in crisis. Outputs:

- Development of shock-responsive protocols
- Support for improved vertical and horizontal coordination

Planning for expansion in reach and value of social transfers during times of crisis.

