CONCEPT NOTE

Title: High-level session, Social protection and inclusion to strengthen community resilience

Date and time: Wednesday, 3 November 2021 (Day 3)

2:00 PM - 3:30 PM Jamaica time, Eastern Standard Time Zone (Jamaica, Panama, Mexico, Peru)

Venue: Virtual

Lead organization: IFRC

Co-lead organization: GNDR, PAHO, ECLAC

GOALS

1. Present good practices and innovative solutions that have shown to strengthen inclusive social protection in the region and contribute to transformative disaster and climate risk sensitive initiatives for all.
2. Agree on concrete and feasible recommendations to strengthen inclusive social protection mechanisms and practices that favour the development of resilient communities throughout the region.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

Prioritized recommendations to enhance intersectoral synergies among social protection and disaster risk management policies with a view towards transformative and innovative solutions to strengthen community resilience through enhanced social protection and inclusive practices, particularly with lessons learned from COVID-19 for better disaster risk governance.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The importance of social protection and inclusion to strengthen community resilience, as well as system-wide disaster risk management and governance, particularly in the context of complex and interconnected risk, has been made abundantly evident through the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the region of the Americas and the Caribbean, the impacts of this crisis are offsetting hard earned development gains for generations to come, affecting overall social and economic wellbeing in ways that are still being understood and across a myriad of sectors, including health, food security and nutrition, education, employment, finance, tourism, to name just a few. This situation is further exacerbated by the compounding effects of climate change and other simultaneous disaster events. While governments were quick to react to the immediate health aspects of this crisis, increased levels of poverty and extreme poverty, unemployment – particularly in the informal sector –, vaccine inequity and discriminatory treatments, and non-remunerated family and household obligations have deepened already existing disparities throughout the region while this health, social and economic crisis continues to overwhelm the response capacities of both governments and non-governmental mechanisms.

Although the exact definition or meaning of social protection may vary from one source to another, the intention of focusing on social protection is consistent in its focus on policies, programmes and instruments protecting particularly the poor, most vulnerable and excluded from shocks and crises. It is an issue of human rights aimed to promote lives, livelihoods and wellbeing; aspects reflected in the Sendai Framework, particularly with regards to the guiding principles and the role of stakeholders.

For the purposes being laid out here, social protection is concerned with preventing, managing, and overcoming situations that adversely affect people's well-being. It encompasses a set of policies and programmes designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability – including inequality and exclusion –, in social, political and economic processes for increased human wellbeing, social and environmental sustainability, empowerment, and resilience. It involves actions for protecting and ensuring the income of individuals, particularly those individuals living in conditions of extreme poverty, but also implies the provision of certain basic services such as health, education, housing, nutrition and others, particularly for those individuals lacking access to such services.

Current interventions that involve social protection are linked to the SDGs, thus reflecting a notable prioritization of policies through countries' commitments towards their achievement. Policies and programmes on social

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protection constitute one of the channels through which governments redistribute resources and increase the sharing of benefits from economic growth, notably to the poorest and marginalized in society.

As States ratified these commitments (through agreements, treaties and conventions), social protection policies have undergone a transition away from a standpoint on the provision of assistance towards a more inclusive perspective based on the protection of rights. This, in order to reduce and eliminate those forms of discrimination that have denied or hindered the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality, particularly to certain social groups such as children and youth, indigenous populations, women, elderly, people with disabilities, migrants, among others. Similarly, newly emerging paradigms are lending support to multi-sectoral programmes aimed at eradicating multidimensional poverty in order to bridge the gaps towards sustainable development as a right for all individuals.

Social protection policies face certain challenges in different countries. Targets are often not met due to the reoccurrence of disasters and climate change related events that disproportionately affect those populations in situations of social or economic vulnerability. This demonstrates that spending on social protection can result, on the one hand, in fragile investments for eradicating poverty if risk is not taken into account and, on the other hand, in the increased exposure to risk when vulnerability and exclusion are not reduced.

From the DRR point of view, such paradigms are also being increasingly relied upon. As demonstrated in the 2019 Global Platform on DRR, there is an imperative need to move from a focus primarily on emergency response towards a greater understanding of the underlying and compounding factors of risk, as well as towards risk-informed sustainable development models. This will undoubtedly facilitate the design and implementation of strategies for building resilience, particularly of those high-risk communities.

It is also important to bear in mind that the region's social protection systems are in a developmental phase, with heterogeneous characteristics among countries. For example, out of 15 Latin American countries, only six (Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Peru and Uruguay) have a high level of coverage, equal to or higher than 70%.

Another aspect to consider are the experiences that countries have developed to support the most vulnerable groups through their protection systems and how these needs have strained the capacities, strengths and weaknesses of these systems in the countries of the region. Social protection measures adopted by the region's countries, such as cash and in-kind transfers, pension fund withdrawals, child and disability benefits, among others, contributed to cushioning the social impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the challenges

remain, and it is necessary to expand the efforts of social protection systems to respond to the magnitude and duration of the crisis.

It is of vital importance that during the design and implementation phases of comprehensive programmes targeting the poorest and most excluded or marginalized social sectors, an increased coherence be secured, in order to reach the Sustainable Development Goals, the Sendai Framework targets, and the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement.

In this sense, harmonized public policies on social protection and disaster risk reduction present a unique opportunity for facing these challenges. When pursued jointly, risk-informed social protection and disaster risk reduction policies can support the sustainability of poverty eradication and overall sustainable development.

This session will serve to put forward good practices and concrete actionable recommendations for incorporating inclusive social protection policies that favour the development of resilient communities.

QUESTIONS THAT THE SESSION WILL SEEK TO ANSWER

1. What are some key factors contributing to synergies and integration between the implementation of policies and programmes of social protection and disaster risk management?
2. Which existing models are available where social inclusion and local disaster management are harmoniously pursued, in order to reduce vulnerability of marginalized persons in society? Are they replicable? What is the biggest challenge they need to overcome to be applicable in multiple contexts?
3. How can we secure coherence between the different development agendas (SDGs, Sendai Framework and Paris Agreement) and the regional, national and local strategies (DRR, development, climate change adaptation strategies and plans, etc.) in order to achieve both social inclusion and resilient communities?
4. How could the progress and achievements of these harmonized policies and programmes best be enhanced and monitored?