



VII Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas and the Caribbean (RP 21)

Building Resilient Economies in the Americas and the Caribbean

1 to 4 November 2021 Virtual Event



CONCEPT NOTE

Title: Parallel Session 5, Using social protection mechanisms to address inequalities in preparedness, response and recovery

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

9.00 AM - 10.00 AM Jamaica Time, Eastern Standard Time Zone (Jamaica, Panama, Mexico, Peru)

Venue: Virtual

Lead organizations: Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR)

Co-lead organization: Inter-American Social Security Conference (CISS), Secretariat for Central American Social Integration (SISCA)

GOALS

1. Identify good practices in strengthening local capacities for DRR through comprehensive social protection programmes, led by the State and with multi-stakeholder collaboration.
2. Learn from different perspectives how social protection mechanisms can be flexible and adaptable to specific conditions and still be pertinent when talking about inequalities.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

1. Links to material and toolboxes to replicate the experiences presented.
2. Session report.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Introduction: Social protection can be understood as “a set of policies and programmes aimed at preventing or protecting all people against poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion throughout their life cycle, with a particular emphasis on vulnerable groups”. It covers a wide range of interventions, both contributory and



non-contributory, that fulfill different functions and objectives. The provision of social protection is deeply embedded in the Sustainable Development Goals (especially within Goals 1 and 10) and has been a growing political priority in low- and middle-income countries in recent years, as evidenced by the increasing coverage rates and levels of institutionalization.

Background: Historically, social protection in LAC has been conceptually and empirically related to responses to shocks, from covariate shocks such as the 1994 Tequila crisis and the 2008 global financial crisis, which propagated the use of cash transfer programmes, to idiosyncratic shocks such as unemployment, work accidents and others. However, advances in knowledge of disaster risk call for a new social protection approach that contributes to managing risks that cannot be effectively reduced.

Social protection is intrinsically related to the response to emergencies. Social protection could help better meet the needs of populations affected by shocks (ensuring adequate coverage and level of support, including other things). For example, social protection interventions effectively targeting the poor can ensure coverage of the most vulnerable to the shocks. Today, it is widely recognized that the poor are more vulnerable to increases in food prices, depend more on unstable sources of income, are more exposed to disasters and climate change and are more strongly affected by diseases and health problems that tend to increase with crashes.

Currently: To date, most social protection policies and programmes have focused on addressing the idiosyncratic risks faced by individuals and households throughout their life cycle. Social protection in “shock response” is not about changing this approach, which is at the core of the sector's “mandate”, but rather represents an invitation to extend the use of social protection to risk-informed preparedness, recognizing that a broader set of covarying risks (natural hazards, conflict, displacement, etc) has played an increasingly important role in determining the life outcomes of families and children. When these shocks are recurrent, prolonged or severe, they destabilize households, making a return to normal life very challenging.

Practical uses: Using social protection systems to respond to an emergency offers an opportunity for governments, humanitarian actors, disaster risk management partners and other allies to reduce the gap between response and recovery, and strengthen the link between humanitarian aid and development. Likewise, social protection can help ensure that poor and vulnerable households affected by shocks are not pushed into greater poverty. If livelihoods are not fully recovered after a stressful situation, households may fall in a cycle of chronic poverty, which increases the risk of food insecurity and the need for social assistance. In addition, social protection, when provided on a regular and predictable basis, has the potential to increase resilience to emergencies for non-poor households and households slightly above the poverty line that are in a vulnerable situation.

Challenges: Social protection policies face the challenges that each country has identified in the face of the SDGs, whose goals are hampered by the recurrence of events associated with climate change that disproportionately affect populations in situations of social and economic vulnerability. From the perspective of DDR, the focus lies on moving from the emergency response paradigm towards risk-informed development models that allow the development of resilience strategies, especially in the communities most exposed to risks. From this understanding, social protection and disaster risk reduction programmes face the challenge of becoming integrated so that they can contribute to advancing both the SDGs and the



goals of the Sendai Framework. Furthermore, the pandemic and the socioeconomic crisis caused by COVID-19 have highlighted the weaknesses and fragilities of the region's welfare and social protection policies, although with important differences between countries. They have also shown the region's deficiencies in terms of population coverage and quality and supply of services and care capacity, and have highlighted the precarious conditions in which millions of people live, whether in terms of employment, income, or effective access to fundamental rights such as health or education. Therefore, all intersectoral and territorial actions must be articulated in national social protection systems, from their design to monitoring and evaluation. This will require deliberate processes of articulation of public policies with actions for social protection, and of these with policies on education, health, employment, housing, and land use planning.

Benefits: Social protection policies are attractive interventions due to their ability to contribute to the achievement of different social policy objectives, such as reducing poverty and inequality, and developing human capital, from multiple avenues. It includes interventions that seek to protect the individual from risks arising from loss of income through non-contributory, contributory and labor measures. It is necessary to emphasize that it incorporates actions to protect and ensure the income of individuals (especially those in extreme poverty), and that allows bringing together different basic services (health, education, housing, nutrition and others), as well as those who lack access to them. In addition, social protection is a response to protect the poorest and most vulnerable population who, in the absence of assistance and protection, face the loss of livelihoods, lower incomes, higher risk of getting sick, less learning and lag in education, and increased food insecurity and malnutrition.

SDGs: Social protection has the potential to reduce poverty and extreme poverty linked to conditions of vulnerability to natural hazards. The SDG 1, End poverty, includes target 1.3, Implement appropriate social protection systems and measures for all at the national level, with an emphasis on the poor and most vulnerable people. Thus, disaster preparedness, response and recovery involve social protection mechanisms to avoid income-measured poverty, of which women and girls are more likely to suffer from. SDG 5 on gender equality highlights in target 5.4 the need to recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work by women and girls through social protection policies, considering that unpaid care and domestic work is a pillar for the recovery of post-disaster communities.

Similarly, the lack of access to social services such as health, education, water, and sanitation impacts the well-being of vulnerable people exposed to natural hazards, this situation is aggravated in the context of social inequalities. In this regard, the SDG 10, Reduction of inequalities, sets out in target 10.2, to "empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status". This target implies adapting social protection policies to vulnerable population groups, who do not necessarily live in situations of poverty or extreme poverty, but who in the event of disasters are at risk of being excluded.

Final reflections: In general, social protection is a window to facilitate the access of the most vulnerable and affected people to the public services they need, being these services the result of the articulation of different social, economic and environmental policies. With regard to this last dimension, the high exposure and vulnerability to hazard of some countries in the region urgently requires to articulate and undertake adaptation and response capacity actions. The consolidation of a stronger and better planned programmatic



offer of social protection will make social protection a fundamental pillar of the construction of more just, sustainable, resilient, and inclusive societies. By focusing on basic well-being guarantees and insurance against risks within the framework of the life cycle, social protection will allow to mitigate the costs of losses in well-being and generate resilience in the face of future events.

A social protection system designed and adapted to better anticipate and respond to shocks, in coordination with other sectors associated with risk management, can play an important role in enabling children and their families to better prepare for, face the impacts of situations of emergency, and recover in a timely and appropriate manner.

QUESTIONS THE SESSION WILL ATTEMPT TO ANSWER

1. To what extent have social protection programmes been developed to strengthen local capacities in DRR in the Americas and the Caribbean?
2. How to adapt social protection mechanisms to the context of multiple risks and social vulnerability?
3. How can social cabinets contribute to the creation of spaces for reflection, research and dialogue to ensure the sustainability of social protection policies?
4. What is the role of civil society in strengthening social protection mechanisms?