



INTEGRATING SOCIAL PROTECTION WITH HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE FOR COMMUNITY DISASTER RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Over the past decade, there has been an increase in the need for humanitarian assistance. This increase has been occasioned by the increased frequency of disasters, the severity of the disasters and the protracted nature of conflicts in some regions around the world. Despite the delivery of high amounts of humanitarian assistance, substantial needs have not been met. Some countries have remained in need and have continued to appeal for Humanitarian Assistance every year. In some cases, resources meant for development have been diverted to meet needs of victims of disasters and crises. As such, the need for better crisis prevention and disaster response mechanisms, as well as the need to focus on long-term resilience building form an integral part of Humanity and the Agenda 2030. There is need to focus on resilience through integration of short-term humanitarian assistance activities with interventions that will support sustainable development. One of the strategies proposed to play the dual role of delivering humanitarian assistance in crisis response as well as address the longer-term needs is social protection. Social protection could make it easy for humanitarian assistance to be delivered through existing systems to reach vulnerable groups faster and also prevent or alleviate future humanitarian crises. This paper looks at the possibility of integrating humanitarian assistance with social protection programs as a strategy of supporting resilience and sustainable development in disaster prone regions. This was a desk review study of scholarly articles and reports on disaster risk reduction and responses using search engines of Google Scholar and Harvard Library HOLLIS+. The study established that most of the emergencies that require humanitarian assistance have more often occurred in contexts of chronic poverty and vulnerability, and that resilience of the communities affected by disasters can enhance sustainable development. To harness the benefits of social protection with humanitarian assistance, systems may have to be set up such that linkages should coordinate the provision of short and long-term interventions to address a wider range of needs for sustainable development.

Keywords: Social Protection, integration, strategy, Humanitarian Assistance, Resilience.

INTRODUCTION

The Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA) report defines Humanitarian assistance as material or logistical assistance provided to people in need with the primary objective to save lives and maintain human dignity after man-made crises and disasters associated with natural hazards (GHA, 2017). Humanitarian assistance not only involves emergency relief (in-kind/cash, material, and logistical assistance), but also covers disaster prevention and preparedness, reconstruction and rehabilitation (OECD 2015). Humanitarian assistance differs from development interventions, including social protection because of the four core humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence. These principles mandate humanitarian Aid/Assistance actors to prioritize human needs and dignity over any economic, political, religious, ideological, or other interests (IFRC, 2017). Whereas Disaster prevention and preparedness aim at reducing losses from disasters, reconstruction and rehabilitation seek to assist the victims of disasters to recover from the effects of disasters and crises. Provision of humanitarian assistance as a response to disasters and crises does not assure the victims sustainable development. In many cases, victims are left in pathetic states of poverty and dependency. Resources meant for development are often diverted to provision of basic needs in order maintain the dignity or sustain the life of the victims.

The year 2016 proved to be a turning point on how humanitarian assistance actors responded to crises. Humanitarian assistance needs were enormous. Forced migration from conflicts was at its highest since World War II (IDMC, 2016); 2015 was the hottest year ever recorded affecting the climate and food production (NASA, 2015); the number and scale of disasters triggered by natural hazards was reported to be very high (UNISDR, 2016). The Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery Annual Report (GFDRR) estimated that global losses from disasters averaged nearly \$200 billion (GFDRR, 2015). Unforeseen crises in some countries like Iraq, Syria, Ukraine, in Gaza, and in Western African countries as a result of the Ebola outbreak brought severe fiscal pressures on the humanitarian and development aid budgets of donor partners in the period 2014-2016. The protracted nature of conflicts in some countries like Syria, Jordan, Yemen and South Sudan further led to high levels of forced displacement and an increased demand for Humanitarian assistance. Conflict driven crises and disasters from natural hazards led to 65.6 million people being displaced (two-thirds of whom were internally displaced) and a total of 164.2 million were left in need of humanitarian assistance in 2016 (GHA, 2017). Global Humanitarian Assistance report estimated that, International Humanitarian Aid rose from US\$16.1bn in 2012 to US\$27.3bn in 2016, yet in 2016 alone, the appeals for Humanitarian assistance were still underfunded by 40 per cent (GHA, 2017).

Although the Humanitarian Aid and Development partners continued to respond by providing cash and in-kind support whenever disasters and crises occurred, the assistance remained inadequate to meet the needs of affected persons (UNISDR, 2015). This therefore called for a new mindset of strategies to meet the ever-increasing need for Humanitarian assistance as well as cater for sustainable development. Today, resilience, better crisis prevention and response mechanisms as well as the need to focus on long-term resilience building form an integral part of the Sustainable Development Goals (Kardan et al, 2017).

According to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction -UNISDR (2015), fundamental issues that find application at all stages of enacting resilience are: anticipation (preparation for a crisis that may well happen); absorption (the ability to cope with adverse conditions); and adaptation (the ability to become better suited to one's environment). Resilience helps to improve linkage between disaster management and development in two ways. Firstly, a good understanding of resilience confirms that developmental actors need to consider disasters, and engage in efforts to mitigate or even prevent them. Secondly, a 'resilience approach' will make emergency response actors to consider time-frames beyond the immediate provision of relief. Social protection has been proposed as one such strategy to provide linkage between Humanitarian assistance and sustainable development (Andrew *et al*, 2012). The extent to which social protection can achieve the key issues of enacting resilience is still the subject of review.

Social protection refers to interventions that aim to reduce poverty and vulnerability through the provision of social assistance, social insurance, and labor market policies (Andrew *et al*, 2012). It involves all initiatives that transfer income or assets to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks, and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalized. The overall objectives of social protection lie in extending the benefits of economic growth and reducing the economic or social vulnerability of poor, the vulnerable and marginalized people (Mosel and Levine, 2014). It is a transformative capacity strategy. Transformative capacity here relates to 'deep social change' across social-ecological systems where people affected by crises will also think beyond relief assistance (Wilson et al., 2013). However, actual process of transforming people to think beyond relief assistance is also a subject for inquiry.

In the transformative strategy, as argued by Bahadur *et al.* (2015), communities' ability to deal with shocks, crises and stresses can be derived from interlinked anticipatory, absorptive, and adaptive capacities. In the context of the transformative strategy, social protection can be looked at from a three functional point of view; protection by providing direct relief to individuals or households in a state of crises; prevention by protecting those who are vulnerable to falling into deprivation as a result of a shock; promotion by enhancing income and capabilities in order to reduce people's future susceptibility to deprivation. Ideally, transformation should address issues of equity and structural vulnerability to poverty which also is a subject of inquiry. The strategy of social protection should enhance community capacity to be transformed so as to anticipate, absorb and adapt to shocks always. However, the strategy is still limited in the extent to which it addresses issues of sustainable development.

Statement of the Problem

Action plans to help maintain resilience of communities affected by disasters and conflicts are not new in the sphere of responses to disasters and crises. In the year 2004, the theme of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies World Disasters Report was a 'focus on community resilience; building the capacity to bounce back'. Some of the challenges identified then were soaring urban populations, environmental degradation, poverty and disease which were compounded by seasonal hazards such as droughts and floods creating situations of chronic adversity (WDR, 2004). Additionally, in 2004, the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action concerned itself with a Safer World. Later on (2005–2015), the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) concerned 'Building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters', while the successor, 'Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction' 2015–2030's priority three, prioritizes 'Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience' (Ovadiya *et al.*, 2015).

All these initiatives recognized that disasters are inevitable and that resources have to be set aside for emergency assistance during crises but did not succeed in maintaining resilience in communities affected by disasters and crises. Today, sixteen years after IFRC's focus on community resilience, the world appears to be facing a worse problem. Despite the delivery of high levels of humanitarian assistance, some countries have remained in need of Humanitarian assistance and have continued to send in appeals for Humanitarian Assistance every year. This has led to resources meant for development being diverted to Humanitarian assistance, a situation that is an impediment to the attainment of the Sustainable development goals. The task of this review therefore, was to examine the possibility of linking social protection to humanitarian assistance as a strategy to maintain resilience and sustainable development for affected communities even after the disasters or crises.

Justification of the Study

There appear to be gaps in research and practice of delivering Humanitarian assistance in a cost-effective and efficient manner as well as making communities resilient. Most notably, studies fail to provide a full picture of how we can maintain a continuum of response from acute and chronic needs to 'bouncing back', thereby bridging the gap between the humanitarian assistance and resilience to maintain sustainable development for communities affected by disasters and crises. This is important given the limited success of previous efforts to convey what is in essence the necessity to engage in pre-disaster actions at least as much as post-disaster response, and, in doing so, hope to diminish the dependency on Humanitarian assistance. Previous notable attempts at community resilience have been through: disaster risk reduction; Sustainable livelihoods; Linking Relief, Recovery and Development (LRRD); and Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness (O'Brien *et al.*, 2018). The 2011 independent Humanitarian Emergency Response Review of the operations of Department for International Development (DFID) introduced resilience as its key strategy for uniting what were previously largely regarded as separate activities (Ashdown, 2011).

METHODOLOGY

The review study was carried out using search engines of Google Scholar and Harvard Library HOLLIS+. The review examined a total of 22 articles that included journal reports, disaster world reports, reports on disasters, crises, disaster risk reduction, resilience, pre and post disaster actions together with the United Nations declarations and actions over the last ten-year period. Two critical issues guided this review; first, what does literature say about social protection's role in facilitating adaptation to disaster preparedness and mitigation? And secondly, to what extent does current thinking on social protection consider how it can help transform the community social and political contexts of vulnerability from disaster situations to resilience for sustainable development?

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The review established that most of the emergencies that require humanitarian assistance have more often occurred in contexts of chronic poverty and vulnerability, and that resilience of communities affected by disasters can enhance sustainable development. Most of the reports acknowledge the need for the affected communities becoming resilient. The review also established that most of the Humanitarian assistance is channeled through established Non-Governmental organizations that strive to rebuild the livelihoods of persons affected by disasters. However, one common denominator from the review is that the resources, particularly the funds are almost always inadequate.

The idea of thinking about social protection interventions in disaster and crises response reflects a shift in thinking in what can be achieved through social protection. Social protection emerged in the early 2000s as a policy response to dealing with vulnerabilities and poverty, particularly in the context of lower-income developing countries. Over the past few years, social protection has evolved to include long-term safety nets and consumption provision through cash, food, and asset-based transfers; a whole range of different types of provision (including home-grown school feeding, public works, insurance packages); and packages of support that complement the utilization of cash and assets (such as cash-plus models and graduation models that frequently include trainings, nutrition, and micro-finance components). In the context of disaster response, Social protection has two potential benefits; first, social protection can benefit insecure households, by reducing the need to sell off assets in the face of shocks and stresses as a result of disasters or crises; and the second role of social protection is in helping households to become resilient to shocks and stresses and to move into productive and independent livelihoods.

Social protection reduces poverty and vulnerability through protection of people from the impoverishing impacts of different social, economic, and lifecycle-based or climate-related risks on their livelihoods. Whereas humanitarian assistance is typically provided as a short-term and one-off support in the case of a sudden crisis, social protection is provided as a predictable safety net that allows people to manage the risks to their livelihoods. Social protection has the potential of delivering response, as well as addressing longer-term needs for people affected by disasters. If social protection were to be implemented, theoretically, a continuum of support and response would be established to help poor and vulnerable households manage risk and stress across a range of circumstances and contexts. Mosel and Levine (2014) argue that the previous challenges in linearity of the 'continuum' approach in Humanitarian assistance sequenced as delivering relief, recovery, and development interventions could be overcome by social protection.

Given that most developing countries have low government capacity to handle large humanitarian crises, humanitarian agencies are stepping in to address needs emerging from a situation of chronic poverty and vulnerability. The economic and geographic scale of destruction and damage to infrastructure, housing, communication lines, and livelihoods assets tests and often surpasses the national disaster response mechanisms, which otherwise are considered, overall, to function well. There are cases of different actors working in parallel and duplicating efforts alongside cases of exemplary programming and collaboration.

Social protection thus holds promise as a tool for adaptation, and moreover, one that aligns with critical perspectives on adaptation and development processes. Large numbers of people have experienced long-term displacement, as well as an exacerbating chronic poverty and vulnerability impacts of shocks. Focus on building social protection systems in contexts of recurring humanitarian crises and climate-related shocks led to a recognition of the overlap in mandate, institutions, and target groups between the ‘humanitarian’ and the social protection sector. This opened up new thinking, a form of social protection referred to as Shock Responsive Social Protection (World Bank, 2016).

SRSP focuses, in particular, on the ability of a social protection system to scale assistance up and down following a shock – either by increasing the level of assistance for existing beneficiaries or by expanding coverage temporarily to non-beneficiaries affected by the shock (Niang and Ramirez, 2014). Shock Responsive Social Protection’ (SRSP) became popular in the years 2008/09 following the global financial, food, and fuel crisis (the 3 Fs). Social protection was used to buffer the effects of macroeconomic shocks on the poor in a range of different countries, particularly the Low- and Middle-Income Countries (Bastagli, 2014; McCord 2013; World Bank, 2013). This strategy continued to be used to scale up social protection to enroll beneficiaries even after crises. More recently, SRSP has been used in response to different types of shocks, including natural or man-made hazards, as well as situations of protracted crises (O’Brien *et al.*, 2018). But governments or authorities in disaster and crises prone areas have missed the link in using social protection for investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience’ they should embrace social protection as a strategy against disasters and crises.

A deep social change across social-ecological systems for a transformative capacity may be useful for enacting resilience for our communities (Wilson *et al.*, 2013). Anticipation (preparation for disasters/crises), absorption (the ability to cope with adverse conditions) and adaptation (the ability to become better suited to one’s environment and strive to attain sustainable development) through social protection schemes are strategies that need to be considered. Such strategies would more likely be easily acceptable since they are less alien or strange to affected communities. There is lack of a continuum, and many households in disaster prone areas are dependent on humanitarian assistance for their livelihoods. Thus, there is need to think about comprehensively linking social protection to Humanitarian Assistance and move into productive, independent livelihoods for sustainable development.

In summary, the roles of social protection have been varied. Social protection has traditionally focused on strengthening economic, human and social capital for stimulating economic growth, however, ‘rights-based’ advocate’s agenda have stressed that social protection also addresses issues of social justice and marginalization (Devereux *et al.*, 2016). Many researchers argue that social protection has the transformative potential to help re- dress structural inequalities, which are embedded in sociopolitical contexts that lie at the root of poverty (Devereux *et al.*, 2016; Merrien, 2013). Most of the research reports on social protection underline the importance of adopting transformative pathways for adaptation that challenge the political, institutional and socioeconomic conditions through which vulnerability to effects of disasters occurs (O’Brien, and Matyas, 2015). Social protection holds promise as a tool for adaptation, and one that aligns with critical perspectives adaptation to development processes.

Arguments for social protection stem from the fact that despite clear evidence on the protracted nature and recurrence of humanitarian crises, the majority of funding continues to cater for short-term year-on-year appeals. For instance, Ulrichs and Slater (2016) reported that out of the 13 countries who placed UN-coordinated appeals in 2016, six had placed appeals every year since 2007. This is because of the overwhelming requests for humanitarian assistance. Such nature of vulnerabilities would benefit from long term interventions of social protection. Pelham *et al.*, (2011) argued that long-term planning would provide insurance against downturns and help vulnerable people ride out times of moderate shocks without returning to a state of desperation for year to year appeals.

Rather than continuing to provide short-term assistance, social protection has the potential to reduce vulnerability and poverty in the long term, which reduces the likelihood of a disaster or crisis situation, and consequently the continued need for humanitarian aid. Secondly, there has been evidence that response to drought emergencies through existing, robust social protection systems can be faster and more cost-effective than conventional humanitarian responses.

Emergency assistance can reach people in a short period of time. The Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP), a social protection scheme was able to deliver emergency assistance within ten days of declaring an emergency, compared to the three to nine months it took a UN-led humanitarian response (World Bank, 2016). The costs of delivery of Humanitarian assistance through the UN led response were also costly compared to the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP), a Social Protection Scheme (Slater and Bhuvanendra, 2013). Finally, in some cases, there can be an overlap between social protection caseloads and humanitarian caseloads; a case in point is in contexts of drought caused food insecurity where social protection assistance reaches chronically food-insecure people, while humanitarian assistance (or emergency scale-ups) reaches seasonally food-insecure people.

In such contexts, linking the delivery and targeting systems of humanitarian assistance and social protection could maximize existing resources from both sectors and invest them into the set-up of permanent systems which register vulnerable groups and scale assistance up and down depending on need. This would also reduce setting up parallel data collection, monitoring, and delivery system which leads to a duplication of efforts. Schimmel (2015) argues that Humanitarian assistance should be in cash rather than in kind form of assistance because harmonizing systems is more difficult when assistance is provided in-kind, whereas cash provides an opportunity to harmonize delivery systems due to its fluidity.

The advantage of using social protection for resilience over new strategies would be that it is not a new idea. Social protection is a widely used approach to adaptation to various situations. According to the World Bank (2018), developing and transition countries spend on average 1.5% of GDP on social safety nets, even in sub-Saharan Africa where programs are in large part donor-funded. Lowder, et al, (2017) estimate that 2.1 billion people in developing countries, or one-third of the population in the developing world, are covered by some form of social protection today.

Arguments against using Social protection for delivering Humanitarian assistance in crises, as well as addressing longer-term needs of sustainable development have mainly been from the principle of Humanity. A number of humanitarian organizations are opposed to this closer alignment of humanitarian assistance and social protection, precisely because social protection alone compromises humanitarian principles. The Humanitarian assistance sector has grappled with the development-disaster divide for decades. The separation of long-term actions from short-term response is seen by some as essential, and by others as a deep problem. 'Purist' humanitarian agencies argue that combining humanitarian action with developmental challenges, such as engaging in local politics, muddies the waters, and can hamper the primary mission of enacting life-saving responses. In other words, the four core humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence may not be observed by state controlled social protection schemes. The trend in social protection in low- and middle-income countries is towards setting up systems owned, and eventually financed, by national governments (ILO, 2014; Devereux *et al*, 2015).

Similarly, delivering Humanitarian assistance through social protection systems that are designed for citizens, by definition, excludes certain groups of non-citizens, such as refugees or internally displaced people (Haider, 2013). The plight of migrants and displaced populations' shows clearly the continuing need for humanitarian response and programming. Displaced populations are rarely catered for within the provision of nationally-owned and resident-targeted social protection systems, in part due to reluctance from governments to legitimize refugees' status by integrating them into national programmes. To ensure operational independence, humanitarian aid has traditionally been channeled through multilateral organizations (UN agencies, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent (ICRC), International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs)) rather than through recipient governments. For instance, only 1.6 per cent of international aid in 2016 was channeled through governments (GHA 2017). But there are cases of displaced persons (Refugees) staying in a foreign country for decades (such as the Somali refugees in Kakuma Refugee camp in Kenya).

Secondly, in times of extreme shocks, additional assistance is still required, which goes beyond what regular social protection can cover. To assess whether social protection can reach vulnerable populations affected by shocks, it is important to address the following concerns: Can social protection programmes cover humanitarian caseloads of households and populations that have different profiles than long-term safety net beneficiaries? Are social protection systems in a given context able to efficiently reach people affected by high-impact disasters? Can social protection adequately cover such disasters including naturally occurring physical phenomena caused either by rapid or slow onset events and cover geophysical (earthquakes, landslides, tsunamis, and volcanic activity), hydrological

(avalanches and floods), climatological hazards (extreme temperatures, drought, and wildfires), meteorological (cyclones and storms/wave surges), or biological hazards (disease epidemics and insect/animal plagues) adequately? (IFRC, 2017).

Another key challenge in responding to humanitarian needs through social protection would be that countries which are most likely to require assistance are the least likely to have functional, large-scale social transfer programmes in place at present. Addressing capacity issues of social protection programmes is critical to ensure realistic expectations of what social protection can achieve in different contexts. Bennett (2016) argues that to achieve this, radical change is needed, because the formal system faces a crisis of legitimacy, capacity and means, blocked by significant and enduring flaws that prevent it from being effective. There would also be need to set up social safety nets in ways that can facilitate sustainability in the long term.

For instance, evacuation strategies are a challenge in a country that lacks reliable infrastructure like roads, bridges, and emergency shelters. For example, previous attempts to improve Haiti's evacuation systems failed to recognize the unique geographic, socioeconomic, and financial challenges faced by the country and its people (Schimmel, 2015). The government identified 1,400 buildings as evacuation centers in case of emergency, but 90 percent of these buildings were schools. Such a plan would make it impossible for students to continue their education for up to months at a time in the event of a disaster. Thus, recognizing the continuing need for humanitarian response, especially in contexts where social protection systems are fragile or non-existent, will lead to an appreciation of the value added of both humanitarian support and resilience.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this review study was to gauge social protection's current and potential role in facilitating resilience to disaster and crises situations. It also sought to assess the extent to which current thinking on an integrated adaptation and social protection can help transform the sociopolitical contexts where vulnerability to disasters originates. In doing so, it contextualized the reviewed literature within the existing debate over whether social protection should be approached from humanitarian relief stand-point or a rights-based transformative one.

It is clear that the continued increase in number of people affected by disasters who need humanitarian assistance in a context of limited funds require more cost-efficient and effective crisis response mechanisms. Given the different vulnerabilities that people affected by disasters and displaced populations face, there might be need for a range of different social protection responses to these. Social protection policies, particularly income protection, can be an important, sometimes the only source of cash income for many households in poor and rich countries alike. In poor countries, even small cash benefits provided on a regular basis can have a large positive impact on well-being and can help combat social exclusion (McKinnon, 2007). One problem with crises resulting from disasters and conflicts is that they have been either intense or complex and protracted in nature. The solution could lie in donor partners thinking of integration of short-term humanitarian assistance and support of the longer-term development interventions of Social Protection. Even then, the available social protection systems are not exclusive and many other areas remain that merit future research, such as issues around evaluating the impact of humanitarian assistance or scale-up payments on recipients' vulnerability to shocks, the technicalities of setting up systems that link social assistance and emergency preparedness plans, and funding mechanisms for shock-responsive social protection.

Whereas arguments for and against use of Social Protection for both humanitarian support and resilience appear to have merit, there is need to get a lasting solution to crises resulting from disasters and conflicts. There is need to recognize that in order to achieve Humanitarian assistance as well as sustainable development, social protection systems (rather than *ad hoc* programmes) need to be facilitated and established so as to ensure longevity of support (financially and politically), as well as to reduce inefficiencies in targeting, harmonize systems of payments and appeals, among other strategies. However, in some regions where crises have occurred due to conflicts, situations may still be hostile for social protection to take effect as a strategy for resilience. The strength of resilience lies not in any particularly new understanding about how to manage crises, but rather in the reaffirmation of fundamental principles, tested over decades such as social protection. Central to these principles is that the best actions are people-centered, and that pre-disaster investments to reduce or even prevent crises are essential. Different forms of social protection will therefore be needed by different groups at different stages. Effective resilience requires actions of governance, at policy level, where decision-makers including governments, aid agencies and the private sector will affirm solutions of a continuum from pre-crises actions to sustainable development as invaluable.

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