

## WORKING PAPER

May 2023

# **Ensuring an Effective Social Protection Response in Conflict-Affected Settings: Findings from the Horn of Africa**

Izzy Birch, Becky Carter, Jeremy Lind and  
Rachel Sabates-Wheeler

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Working Paper

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## Summary

The interaction between social protection and conflict is an emerging area of study with particular relevance to the Horn of Africa, where conflict and political instability are habitual risks and where social protection is now a well-established field of intervention, including in response to climate-related shocks. Yet the connection between these two policy areas is poorly articulated. While frontline practitioners may be acutely aware of, and responsive to, conflict and political dynamics, these are less well reflected in the frameworks that guide social protection policy and programming. Where conflict is considered, it tends to be as a discrete shock rather than a chronic condition – the purpose being primarily to avoid doing further harm.

The three country case studies on which this paper draws, along with a preliminary investigation of the literature, suggest a number of ways in which development partners could use their resources and leverage to strengthen the conflict sensitivity of social protection at both a strategic and operational level. A useful first step would be to facilitate deeper and more inclusive conversations on how social protection could engage with conflict dynamics in a more explicit and sustained way, with a view to making a positive contribution to peace in fragile contexts.

## Keywords

Conflict; political instability; social protection; shock-responsiveness; humanitarian assistance; Horn of Africa; Kenya; Somalia; Sudan.

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# Executive Summary

This paper explores the interaction between social protection and conflict in the Horn of Africa. It draws on a preliminary investigation of the literature and case studies from Somalia, Sudan and Kenya (supplemented by insights from Ethiopia) to answer three questions:

1. To what extent and in which ways do social protection programmes and policies consider conflict-related risks?
2. What features enable the effective delivery of social protection during conflict and in response to displacement? What features mitigate against this?
3. What can development partners do to make social protection programmes and systems more conflict sensitive and conflict responsive?

These questions point to four dimensions in which social protection and conflict intersect: sensitivity, system resilience, response, and transformation. Conflict sensitivity is often conceptualised as a continuum, which at minimum aims to avoid harm but more ambitiously may try to influence conflict dynamics in a positive direction, and possibly even transform them. Two possible outcomes of a conflict-sensitive approach to social protection would be: (1) that programmes are sufficiently resilient for delivery to be maintained during and after conflict; and (2) that social protection can be mobilised to respond to the additional needs created by conflict, as it increasingly does in response to climate-related shocks.

On the whole, the social protection policies and programmes reviewed for this research pay little attention to conflict until circumstances force them to do so; where they do, conflict tends to be regarded as a discrete shock rather than the persistent and protracted condition that now characterises large parts of the region. The principal aim is to avoid harm and mitigate the risk of grievance; very little attention is given to how social protection systems could maximise the potential for peace. At an operational level, however, experienced practitioners in places such as Darfur, southern Somalia, and northern Kenya demonstrate an acute awareness of – and responsiveness to – conflict and political dynamics, though would not necessarily attach a ‘conflict sensitivity’ label to this.

The conflict resilience of social protection has been tested across the region, from the collapse of Ethiopia’s Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in Tigray to the rapid pivoting demanded in Sudan after the 2021 coup. These ruptures present major challenges for programming, and the most common response has been to rely on humanitarian channels to maintain assistance. The fragmentation of responsibility across government – with little interaction between the sectors responsible for social protection, peace and security, and

disaster risk management – presents a further challenge to conflict responsiveness. Yet, these volatile environments also throw up moments of opportunity when a more frank discussion of conflict trends and a more radical and creative response become possible. The post-revolutionary moment in Sudan was one such (albeit largely missed) opportunity.

We can identify features that enable the design and delivery of social protection in response to conflict and displacement at two levels. At a strategic level, they include a more explicit focus on the full spectrum of conflict sensitivity in programme design, including any cross-border dimensions, built on a sound understanding of context and managed in ways that embrace complexity and uncertainty. Operationally, the enablers of conflict-sensitive social protection include properly resourced stakeholder engagement, careful deployment of, and investment in, skilled staff, and effective citizen-centred accountability mechanisms. Digital technologies, now widely used across the region, can facilitate delivery to conflict-affected or migrant populations but they also introduce new risks and vulnerabilities, such as those associated with women's unequal access to technology or the political control of communication systems.

Development partners could strengthen the conflict sensitivity, resilience, and responsiveness of social protection systems and programmes in a number of ways. The recommendations set out in this paper are structured around five common donor functions:

1. **Convening:** Development partners should use their convening power to facilitate a conversation on what 'doing more good' might mean for social protection, and encourage closer dialogue between those responsible for social protection, peace and security, and disaster risk management. These processes should bring in as wide a range of opinion and experience as possible (particularly local actors at the frontline of social protection and conflict programming), and earmark sufficient staff time and resources to be able to respond and adapt.
  2. **Capacity support:** Development partners should encourage and cultivate practices of 'thinking and working politically', both internally and with their grantees and partners. Other priorities would be to design social protection accountability mechanisms with conflict sensitivity in mind, and to explore how to enhance the conflict resilience of social protection systems and programmes, as well as exploring opportunities to reinforce shock-responsive social protection systems from a conflict perspective.
  3. **Knowledge management:** The interaction between social protection and conflict is an emerging area of study. To that end, there is a need for further field-based investigation of these issues, including learning from existing grounded practice. At an appropriate time, evaluations of the scale-up of
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social protection during the region's current humanitarian crisis should be commissioned, including the extent to which conflict and displacement were considered.

4. **Policy dialogue:** Through their conversations with governments, development partners can help develop a deeper understanding of conflict in each context that recognises the breadth of its drivers and dimensions, and explores the potential role of national social protection systems to respond. Wherever possible, this dialogue should encourage a more open discussion of exclusion and bias, and ensure that monitoring and accountability frameworks focus not just on those who benefit from social protection but on the consequences for those who do not.
5. **Funding:** Grantees and partners should be required to integrate conflict sensitivity in a more explicit and sustained way, but in order to do so they must first be allowed the space and resources to reflect, learn, and adapt, and to allocate sufficient staff capacity to this goal. Donors should consider funding social protection interventions that also help fill key gaps in knowledge, while continuing to advance the localisation agenda across their portfolio.



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## Acronyms

DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs (Ireland)
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (UK)
HSNP	Hunger Safety Net Programme (Kenya)
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
KSEIP	Kenya Social and Economic Inclusion Project
MCCT+	Mother and Child Cash Transfer Plus (Sudan)
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NSNP	National Safety Net Programme (Kenya)
PMT	proxy means test
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Programme (Ethiopia)
SAGAL	Social Transfers to Vulnerable Somali People
SFSP	Sudan Family Support Programme
SIP	Social Initiatives Programme (Sudan)

# 1. Introduction

This study maps out the opportunities for governments and development partners to contribute to the framing, design, and delivery of social protection in contexts of conflict. It draws together and builds on key insights from exploratory case studies across the Horn of Africa to provide a framing of how considerations of conflict impact the programming and delivery of social protection. Irish Aid commissioned the study to inform its work on social protection, particularly in fragile contexts and regions, as a key policy instrument to reach those furthest behind, to reduce extreme poverty, and respond to shocks and emergencies (Government of Ireland 2019a, 2019b; Irish Aid 2017).

Conflict and fragility challenge the design and delivery of social protection while simultaneously heightening the vulnerabilities it seeks to address. This study considers both these aspects – that is, how social protection programmes function in situations of conflict and instability, as well as the extent to which programming responds to conflict and conflict-related shocks. The country case studies – which looked at social protection and conflict in Kenya, Somalia, and Sudan (and, to a more limited extent, Ethiopia) – focused on three research questions:

1. To what extent and in which ways do social protection programmes and policies consider conflict-related risks?
2. What features enable the effective delivery of social protection during conflict and in response to displacement? What features mitigate against this?
3. What can development partners do to make social protection programmes and systems more conflict sensitive and conflict responsive?

These questions illustrate how social protection and conflict intersect in the following dimensions:<sup>1</sup>

1. **Sensitivity:** Understanding the realities of operating in areas affected by or at risk of conflict in order to adapt programmes and interventions in ways that minimise harm and, where possible, have a positive impact on conflict dynamics.<sup>2</sup>
2. **System resilience:** Maintaining the systems and structures necessary for the delivery of social protection during and after conflict.

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<sup>1</sup> The first three dimensions are informed by analysis undertaken by Slater and Longhurst on the delivery of social assistance systems in protracted crises (summarised in Slater and Longhurst 2022).

<sup>2</sup> Besser (2021); Directorate-General for International Partnership, European Commission (2021).

3. **Response:** Mobilising social protection to respond to the additional needs created by conflict.
4. **Transformation:** Designing and delivering social protection to facilitate and promote peace-building and social justice.

The design of the research was limited in scope. How social protection engages with conflict factors is an emerging area of study, and this review is a preliminary investigation of the conceptual and operational literature that intends to signal potential pathways and research questions for future, more in-depth analysis. The methodology involved a rapid but thorough review of literature supplemented by 5–7 interviews with stakeholders in Kenya, Somalia, and Sudan. The study also includes some insights from Ethiopia, but has not looked at Ethiopia's experience in the same depth.

The case studies describe the social protection policy and programme landscape in each country, focusing on non-contributory social assistance and regular cash or in-kind transfers to households and individuals in particular (in the Horn of Africa, the latter dominates both social protection programming and related literature). Box 1.1 sets out the distinction between social protection and social assistance. The case studies focused on what might be considered the 'flagship' social protection programme in each country; all of them are ostensibly government-led though in practice, government involvement varies considerably (as Table 2.1 shows).

In crisis situations, social assistance generally encompasses humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian assistance uses the same modalities (cash, vouchers, food aid, and public works) but tends to focus more on transfers than on other mechanisms such as subsidies or public works. Humanitarian assistance can be a short-term response to a particular shock where state capacities are overwhelmed, and it can include one-off or (short-term) multi-month transfers. Increasingly, though, humanitarian responses are protracted or recurrent – delivering transfers for years or even decades, rather than weeks or months. It is in these situations that the distinction between humanitarian assistance and social assistance becomes blurred (Slater and Sabates-Wheeler 2021).

With humanitarian cash-based and food assistance still a critical source of support for millions of people across the three countries studied, where relevant the research includes findings on the interlinkages between national social protection systems and programmes and humanitarian aid.

## Box 1.1 What is social protection and what is social assistance?

- ‘Social protection describes all public and private initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks, and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalised; with the overall objective of reducing the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups’ (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler 2004: iii).
- Social assistance is defined as non-contributory interventions (that is, the full amount is paid by the provider) that are designed to help poor and vulnerable individuals and households. Some are targeted based on categories of vulnerability (for example, old age, disability) and some are targeted to low-income households. Usually provided by the state and financed by national taxes, in lower-income contexts social assistance support from international donors is also important. Types of social assistance include unconditional and conditional cash, food or in-kind transfers (which include social pensions, school feeding and public works programmes), fee waivers, and subsidies (Barrientos 2010, cited in Carter *et al.* 2019; World Bank 2018b: 5).

This paper starts by setting the scene for conflict and social protection in the focus countries (section 2). It then explores to what extent and how social protection programmes consider conflict-related risks (section 3). It identifies the features that enable effective social protection (section 4), and concludes with recommendations for development partners (section 5).

## 2. Context: setting the scene

This section provides some comparative analysis of the conflict profile and state of social protection in the three focus countries, with additional references to Ethiopia.

After decades of armed conflict in **Somalia** and a vacuum in governance since the collapse of the state in 1991, the framework of a federal government has been slowly assembled and a degree of stabilisation achieved. Significant constitutional issues remain unresolved, particularly the relationship between the federal government and the member states, including separatist Somaliland. Armed groups, primarily Al-Shabaab, contest the state's legitimacy and restrict its territorial reach to not much more than urban enclaves. The Islamist identity of these groups adds an international dimension to the conflict: access to populations under Al-Shabaab's control is curtailed not just by the violence but by the counter-terrorism priorities of Western donors. While the struggle with Al-Shabaab receives the most political attention, Somalia is also prone to local-level inter-communal violence, often linked to inter-clan rivalry over resources.

In **Sudan**, the explosion of violence between factions of the military in April 2023 underlines the severity of the country's ongoing political crisis. The 2019 revolution that toppled the Al-Bashir regime set in train a transitional process towards democratic governance that was derailed by a military coup in October 2021. This was the latest in a repeated cycle of coup (1958, 1969, 1989) and popular uprising (1964, 1985) that has marked Sudan's post-independence history. The country has endured two extended periods of civil war with the south, which finally became independent in 2011, and prolonged violent conflict in its peripheral regions, notably Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile states (ACLED 2020; Berridge 2019; de Waal 2019). The systematic marginalisation and exploitation of these regions to serve the interests of a political and military elite in central Sudan has been a major driver of conflict and political instability (Thomas and El Gizouli 2020; Republic of Sudan 2019).

Serious post-election violence in **Kenya** in 2007–08 highlighted the risks of ethnic exclusion in a centralised political system. The 2010 Constitution introduced substantial political and institutional reforms, which reshaped conflict dynamics. A far-reaching process of devolution diffused political contestation but heightened conflict vulnerabilities in some of the new counties (Lind 2018). The most overt conflict emerges in areas where the state's remit has always been thin, particularly in the north. These areas are part of ecosystems that stretch across international borders and are therefore implicated in, and affected by, conflicts in neighbouring states. They are also places where innovative peace-building solutions emerged in the early 1990s: the state's absence forced civil



society back on its own resources to develop mechanisms of conflict reconciliation and monitoring that the state later adopted and institutionalised (*ibid.*).

Each country is therefore shaped by conflict in different ways and to differing degrees. The primary threat in Somalia is an armed insurgency against a weak state, while in Sudan, a powerful state has suppressed a popular movement towards democratic reform. Another strong state (Ethiopia), buttressed by a third party (Eritrea), has been in open conflict with part of its population; the war in Tigray led to the collapse of long-standing donor-funded programmes, including the flagship social protection programme, the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) (Sabates-Wheeler and Lind 2021).

The regional ramifications of Ethiopia's crisis are a reminder both of the cross-border dimensions of conflict and how closely countries are inter-connected. Sudan and Kenya host nearly 1.7 million refugees between them, while Kenya (alongside Ethiopia) is an active participant in the Somali conflict; its forces have been fighting there since 2011 and its own territory is subject to Al-Shabaab incursions (Lind, Mutahi and Oosterom 2017). Inequality is common to all countries: spatial inequalities are a source of political instability in both Kenya and Sudan, while a key fault line in Somalia is the exclusion of minority ethnic groups and clans. Gender inequalities persist across the region, and violence against women and girls is pervasive. Another shared dilemma is that of a rapidly growing youth population with limited employment and economic prospects, and consequently fears that they are vulnerable to trafficking or terrorist recruitment (UN Kenya 2022; Rutherford *et al.* 2020).

For all countries of the region, conflict is just one of many threats to food security and human development. The current humanitarian crisis illustrates the persistent vulnerabilities: across Somalia, Sudan, and Kenya, close to 29 million people are in urgent need of assistance and approximately 6.9 million are internally displaced.<sup>3</sup> Climate change interacts with socioeconomic vulnerabilities and compounds the challenges for food security, health, and the sustainability of infrastructure (Richardson *et al.* 2022). The region's capacity to manage these multiple risks has waxed and waned. The last major crisis on a regional scale, in 2011, spurred governments and donors to collaborate under the leadership of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in mapping out a strategy to end the cycle of short-term humanitarian response and strengthen the foundations essential for drought-resilient livelihoods, including peace and security.<sup>4</sup> Heads of government recognised the need for longer-term approaches, institutionalised in government systems. Among other things, this

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<sup>3</sup> **Sudan:** 15.8 million people in need, of whom 3.7 million are internally displaced. **Somalia:** 8.3 million people in need and 3 million internally displaced. **Kenya:** 4.5 million people in need and 190,000 internally displaced (all accessed 15 March 2023).

<sup>4</sup> **IGAD Resilience Portal** (accessed 21 April 2023).

accelerated the adoption of safety nets across the region (already well-established in Ethiopia at that time) alongside a range of other risk management measures, such as contingency finance and disaster insurance.

## 2.1 Social protection systems in the three countries

The social protection system in each country (Table 2.1) inevitably reflects, and is shaped by, these conflict dynamics. The implications for donors interested in social protection also differ by country.

Weak central political authority in **Somalia** has, on the one hand, allowed innovation to flourish (Somalia was a pioneer of cash-based assistance in conflict) but has also placed international agencies firmly in the driving seat as the nascent social protection system takes shape. Humanitarian cash-based assistance has laid the groundwork for the social protection sector, and the two social protection programmes currently implemented under government oversight (Shock Responsive Safety Net for Human Capital Project (Baxnaano) and Social Transfers to Vulnerable Somali People (SAGAL)) rely heavily on humanitarian partners. But this presents a clear risk that the emerging social protection system will reproduce the practices that have at times impaired the credibility of the humanitarian system, criticised for the way in which aid has played into conflict dynamics, as well as the structural exclusion of certain social groups (Thomas and Opiyo 2021; Expanding Access to Justice Program 2021; Jaspars, Adan and Majid 2020; Maxwell *et al.* 2014). All international assistance to Somalia is entangled with donor governments' political response to the conflict with Al-Shabaab. The challenge for social protection is finding a model that provides long-term predictable assistance in the absence of strong state leadership and capacity.

In **Sudan**, the al-Bashir regime, deprived of international development assistance, developed an extensive social protection system that was largely financed by compulsory *zakat* contributions collected and distributed by the state (Machado, Bilo and Helmy 2018). However, this reinforced rather than reduced spatial inequalities. Social protection in conflict-affected peripheral regions was, for the most part, left to international agencies to provide, primarily in the form of humanitarian social assistance (Ndip, Hassan and Osman 2020; Kjellgren *et al.* 2014). After the 2019 revolution, the transitional government launched new social protection programmes that were more strongly driven by principles of inclusion and equity and attracted more donor support. However, the absence of legitimate government since the October 2021 coup, compounded by continuing violence, has left the direction of all programming (including social protection) in a state of profound uncertainty. Unwilling to lend legitimacy to the regime, donors have reverted to models of assistance (predominantly humanitarian) that largely

bypass government. The principal challenge for donors is thus one of system resilience: how to sustain financing and programming during a period of political rupture.

**Kenya's** relative stability has allowed it to invest in a system that is growing in maturity and increasingly state-financed (Opalo 2021), but has so far achieved only limited coverage, particularly in the informal sector (Doyle and Ikutwa 2021). State capacity is reasonably high, and so the principal challenge is system responsiveness: how to strengthen its reach, effectiveness, and impact without undermining government leadership, but also without being seduced by this period of relative stability and forgetting the underlying social and political vulnerabilities.

These vulnerabilities are well-illustrated by **Ethiopia**, whose social protection system (which is not included in Table 2.1) might have been presented a few years ago as a maturing, well-functioning and geographically standard model. However, the recent conflict in Tigray has illustrated stark regional disparities in how the system is (un)able to respond. So, care should be taken when classifying the capabilities of social protection systems at national level; instead, protracted and acute conflict in different regions may require a multi-level and phased approach to the setting up and strengthening of social protection systems and institutions (see Box 3.2 for a discussion on the implications of conflict for programming in the north of Ethiopia).

**Table 2.1 Maturity of social protection systems in case study countries and key features of selected social assistance programmes**

No.	Social protection context	Social assistance provision in each country		
1	No system or severely weakened system			
2	Nascent social protection system	<b>Somalia</b>		
		Policy status:	Approved 2019	
		Principal social assistance programmes:	Baxnaano and SAGAL	
		Coverage:	Number of households covered by Baxnaano / SAGAL	264,221 <sup>5</sup>
		Finance:	Government share of funding of Baxnaano / SAGAL Principal donors: World Bank (Baxnaano) European Union (SAGAL)	0%
Targeting mechanism:	Baxnaano: (1) district selection using distress index; (2) community selection based on availability of services and partners; (3) household selection using community-based approach (now being replaced with proxy means test, PMT). SAGAL: (1) categorical (children, youth, elderly); (2) community-based.			

<sup>5</sup> Baxnaano / SAGAL project documents.

		Shock-responsive mechanism:	Two: within Baxnaano and SAGAL Number of additional households reached: 155,000 (Baxnaano) <sup>6</sup>		
3	National (state-led) social protection system unable to respond to repeated crises	<b>Sudan</b> <sup>7</sup>			
		Policy status:	Draft developed by transitional government in 2019/20		
		Principal social assistance programmes:	Sudan Family Support Programme (SFSP) – suspended. Social Initiatives Programme (SIP) – former regime.		
		Coverage:	Number of households covered by SIP	500,000	
			% vulnerable households covered by SIP	19%	
		Finance:	Government share of funding of social assistance prior to 2019 revolution (all)	70–80% <sup>8</sup>	
Shock-responsive mechanism:	None				
4	Limited shock-responsive national social protection system	<b>Kenya</b> <sup>9</sup>			
		Policy:	Approved 2011 and under revision		
		Principal social assistance programmes:	National Safety Net Programme (NSNP), comprising: 1. Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (CT-OVC)  2. Older Persons Cash Transfer (OPCT), which is being replaced with the Inua Jamii social pension		

<sup>6</sup> Al-Ahmadi (2022).

<sup>7</sup> Ndip *et al.* (2020) (2018 data).

<sup>8</sup> Devereux (2022) (2018 data).

<sup>9</sup> FCDO (2022b); Doyle and Ikutwa (2021).

			3. Persons with Severe Disabilities Cash Transfer (PwSD-CT)
			4. Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP).
		Coverage:	Number of households covered by NSNP
			1.23 million
			% vulnerable households covered by NSNP
			12%
		Finance:	Government share of funding of NSNP
			100%
		Targeting mechanism:	PMT and community-based validation. HSNP also uses a modified version of the national revenue allocation formula to determine the total beneficiaries in each administrative unit, after which the PMT and community-based processes are applied.
		Shock-responsive mechanism:	One (within HSNP), drought-focused Number of additional households reached: 270,000 (2013–18)
5	Highly shock-responsive national social protection system		

Source: Adapted from Sabates-Wheeler *et al.* (2022).

### 3. To what extent, and in which ways, do social protection programmes consider conflict-related risks?

This section discusses the relationship between social protection and conflict in terms of the four dimensions set out in the Introduction: sensitivity, system resilience, response, and transformation. ‘Conflict’ is understood in broad terms,<sup>10</sup> and conflict sensitivity is relevant ‘both where there is active violent conflict and in situations that are fragile but currently non-violent (latent conflict)’ (Stabilisation Unit 2016: 3). In general, the connection between social protection and conflict is at present poorly articulated in the frameworks that guide social protection policy and programming.

Conflict sensitivity is often presented as a continuum (Figure 3.1, see overleaf). At the far left-hand side of the diagram, an approach that ignores the dynamics that shape conflict and peace will leave the situation unchanged, or may even make it worse. A conflict-sensitive approach, on the other hand, will demonstrate an awareness of how the intervention interacts with the context in which it is being implemented. At minimum, it will aim to avoid further harm. More ambitiously, it may deliberately seek to influence conflict dynamics in a positive direction, possibly even in ways that directly transform them. In summary, conflict-sensitive social protection will incorporate into its design, targeting, and delivery a systematic understanding of its interaction with the local context in order to minimise harm, ensure that conflict-affected populations can access the programme as intended, and (where possible) promote peace-building and social justice.

#### 3.1 Overall approach to conflict

The country case studies offer three broad findings about the approach to conflict, based on a review of documents associated with the programmes described in Table 2.1 as well as observations made by key informants. **First, social protection interventions pay little attention to conflict until circumstances force them to do so.** Sudan is the most obvious example, where interest in conflict sensitivity has recently increased as agencies struggle to navigate the current political crisis, which has directly affected their ability to function. A comparison of documentation for the Sudan Family Support Programme (SFSP) (designed during the brief window of optimism opened up by the formation of the

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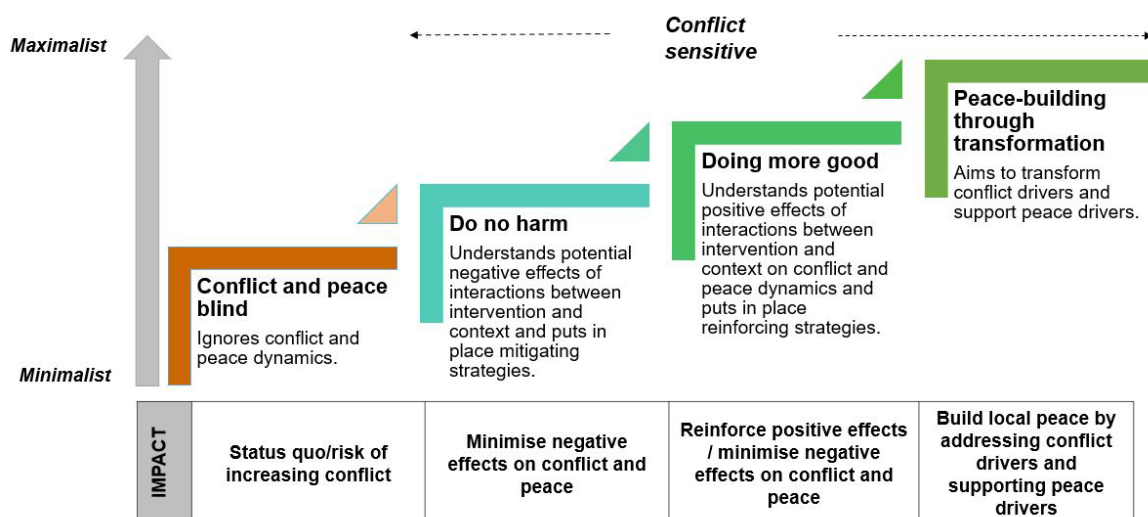
<sup>10</sup> ‘... all socio-economic and political tensions, root causes and structural factors are relevant to conflict sensitivity because they all have the potential to become violent’ (Conflict Sensitivity Consortium 2004: 1).

transitional government in 2019) and the Sudan Emergency Safety Nets Programme (designed after the 2021 coup) shows that conflict sensitivity is more explicit in the latter than the former (World Bank 2022a, 2020). In Somalia, where conflict is also an immediate and pressing threat, social protection policy pays more attention to conflict than in neighbouring countries: Ethiopia’s strategy makes no mention of armed or violent conflict (Harvey and Mohamed 2022), while Kenya’s policy makes passing reference to conflict as a potential shock but makes no further mention (Republic of Kenya 2011).

**Second, and as the Kenya policy illustrates, where conflict is acknowledged, it is usually as a discrete shock rather than a chronic condition.** For populations in many parts of the region – northern Kenya, southern Somalia, and the southern and western regions of Sudan – conflict is a constant presence in their lives and a force that shapes their livelihood strategies. The persistent nature of the threat, like that of drought, suggests that predictable support – of the kind that social protection can offer – may be an appropriate response.

**Third, conflict is sometimes considered in one-dimensional terms, which limits the scope of analysis and response.** In Somalia, for example, the preoccupation with security and stabilisation in the fight against Al-Shabaab means that much less attention is given to the dynamics that shape vulnerability and operability at a local level, including micro-level politics and social divisions. An exploration of the triple nexus in Somalia concluded that grassroots-based peace-building may be its weakest leg (Medinilla, Shiferaw and Veron 2019).

**Figure 3.1 The social protection conflict-sensitivity continuum**



Source: Adapted from FAO (2019) and Besser (2021).



## 3.2 Conflict-sensitive social protection

A conflict-sensitive approach requires an understanding of key conflict-related risks, which tend to concern power dynamics and tensions related to 'inequality, exclusion and marginalisation of different groups due to characteristics such as religion, political affiliation, ethnicity, gender, disability and age' (Global Protection Cluster 2022: 4). We can draw three conclusions from the country case studies about the conflict sensitivity of current social protection programming.

First, the focus is largely around the 'do no harm' component of Figure 3.1. **We found very few examples of constructive engagement with conflict processes, let alone peace-building** (those we did find are discussed in section 3.5). **The primary concern of most social protection programmes reviewed was to reduce the likelihood that grievances will arise.** It may be – as informants in Sudan suggested – that where crisis is all-pervading and conflict especially acute, anything more than preventing further harm is not a realistic expectation. There could also be hesitation about stepping into a different specialist field. The organisations that are implementing social protection programmes may have a reasonable sense of how to avoid making a situation worse, by understanding and carefully managing stakeholder interests and expectations. Yet implementers feel far less confident about deliberately shaping conflict-related processes, either because of a lack of operational guidance on how to do so, or because of a perception that these are political issues that lie beyond the remit of social protection as a field of technical design and implementation. However, where conflict and the risk of violence are endemic – and, therefore, where any action will alter the conflict system in some way – an approach that is limited to the avoidance of harm is likely to be insufficient.

A second general finding is that **conflict-sensitive approaches may be being applied but not referred to as such.** Experienced practitioners in places such as Darfur, southern Somalia, and northern Kenya describe how their ability to operate depends on them being keenly attuned to changes in their environment, weighing up the likely consequences of their every action. This may inform their choices about a wide range of operational matters, such as which staff are deployed where, or the content of training programmes, or how they engage with different categories of stakeholder. For this cadre of professionals, an acute awareness of, and responsiveness to, political dynamics is an integral and instinctual part of how they operate in these settings, but not something to which they would necessarily attach a 'conflict sensitivity' label.

The third overall conclusion is that **social protection policies and strategies may refer to conflict sensitivity but not always elaborate, at least publicly, what that means.** As a result, it is not clear how deeply the implications of a conflict-sensitive approach have been considered, at both a strategic (design)

and operational (delivery) level. The rest of this section provides examples of conflict-sensitive measures at these two levels, drawn from the case studies.

### 3.2.1 Design measures

An important question is whether the choice of social protection model is best-suited to a conflict-affected environment, particularly its likely impact on factors such as social cohesion. Social cohesion relates to the quality of both vertical (citizen–state) and horizontal (within civil society) interaction, indicated by three relational attributes: trust, a sense of belonging, and the willingness to participate and help (Chan, To and Chan 2006). Peace-building specialists connect low levels of social cohesion with the likelihood of higher levels of violent and destructive conflict (United Nations and World Bank 2018; United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Search for Common Ground 2015). The literature suggests that the impact of social protection on social cohesion is limited and mixed; its impact is conditioned by other factors such as perceptions of the effectiveness or fairness of social protection, or the quality of recipients' prior interaction with the state (Lowe *et al.* 2022; Nixon and Mallett 2017). Social protection is more likely to reduce social exclusion and non-material inequalities when it is conceptualised in terms of rights and complemented by other policy measures (Roelen, Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux 2016).

This complementarity is illustrated by the Kenya Social and Economic Inclusion Project (KSEIP). One of its three components aims to improve the access of NSNP beneficiaries to a range of complementary services and economic inclusion activities, such as subsidised National Hospital Insurance Fund registration. These commitments are embedded as intermediate outcomes in the project's theory of change (World Bank 2018a: 18). The design also incorporates explicit measures to enhance the inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised groups, and aims to improve gender outcomes by introducing interventions targeted directly at women and by ensuring that monitoring frameworks, surveys, and the single registry support the disaggregation of data and analysis by gender (*ibid.*). It is too early yet to evaluate the impact of these interventions, but one emerging lesson is that multisectoral programming of this kind brings in a much larger group of stakeholders, increasing the centrality and complexity of functions such as communication and outreach (KSEIP 2021).

A different model is provided by the SFSP in Sudan. On the one hand, it signalled a departure from the exclusionary practices of the former regime by targeting all Sudan's populations, excluding only public sector employees and the wealthy. Those who designed the programme hoped that this would renew trust in government, particularly in conflict-affected areas. On the other hand, it was essentially a palliative measure – a time-limited transfer designed to protect Sudanese from the impact of economic reforms and to mitigate the risk of

associated violence. Sudanese key informants for this study questioned this form of individualised assistance in a fractured society where the causes of poverty and instability are structural. If one were concerned about societal tensions, one might look for models of social protection that purposely seek to reinforce connections within and between communities. Representatives of Somali civil society made a similar point and are planning to develop models of cash-based assistance that look beyond the individual or household level (NEXUS 2021a).

The focus of accountability frameworks for social assistance is also primarily on the individual as beneficiary, rather than as a rights-holder embedded in larger social systems; the attention is on those selected to benefit rather than the situation of those who are left out (Thomas and Opiyo 2021). The priority is the effectiveness of the delivery chain. While this can encompass appeals mechanisms for those excluded from targeting but who seek to be assisted, limited consideration is given to the impact of delivery on societal relations more broadly.

Finally, targeting is an obvious area of risk and one that is subject to considerable attention by programmes across the region. As a system of rationing finite resources, targeting is ‘inherently conflictual’ (Birch 2023), particularly where eligibility is determined on the basis of poverty and where – as applies across much of the region – poverty is very broadly based. Evidence from lowland areas of Ethiopia, for example, where traditional leaders have an active role in PSNP targeting, suggests that their involvement can enhance public confidence in targeting processes, particularly where state–society relations are weak or even conflictual. In these contexts, targeting decisions are informed not just by agreed technical criteria but by local perceptions of what is fair, and by the desire to minimise conflict – for example, by ensuring that a wider population benefits and by balancing allocations relative to the population size of different clans (Lind *et al.* 2021).

A multi-layered approach that combines targeting methods may help to reduce the risk of exclusion, as illustrated by the SAGAL programme in Somalia, which is complementing its community-based targeting methodology with a mapping of minority group representation (Box 3.1). A further consideration is the inclusion of internally displaced people and refugees, which those responsible for SAGAL in Somalia and UNICEF’s Mother and Child Cash Transfer Plus (MCCT+) project in Sudan argue is facilitated by their universalist approach to targeting. Any pregnant woman within the targeted localities is entitled to benefit from the MCCT+,<sup>11</sup> while SAGAL deliberately focuses on urban areas where internally displaced people tend to concentrate.

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<sup>11</sup> A study of social protection for people who are forcibly displaced in low- and middle-income countries reports that some refugees have been registered (OECD 2022b: 37).

## Box 3.1 Multi-layered targeting in Somalia

‘Those implementing SAGAL recognise the strengths and weaknesses of community-based targeting. Its principal advantage from a conflict-sensitivity perspective is its potential to tap into grass-roots understandings of vulnerability and risk and connect with the structures that manage social tensions at that level. The principal risk is reinforcing the biases of those structures and the consequent exclusion of certain groups. The [Somalia Cash Consortium] is responding to this risk by adding another layer of geographical targeting informed by a mapping of where minority groups are most concentrated. It also relies on the calibre of its teams who must be ‘very active, very present’ in monitoring how things are being done.’

Source: Birch (2023) (original footnotes removed).

Somalia provides other examples of how targeting decisions respond to conflict dynamics. For example, those responsible for Baxnaano allocated an equal number of districts to each federal member state (and Somaliland) as a strategy to manage inter-state dynamics and accommodate perceptions of fairness (Al-Ahmadi and Zampaglione 2022). There are also instances of the programme adjusting to changes in the geography of the conflict, accommodating districts newly liberated from Al-Shabaab so that the government could be seen to respond to a previously inaccessible population (Birch 2023).

### 3.2.2 Delivery measures

Table 3.1 illustrates some of the steps taken by social protection actors to manage programme delivery in areas where conflict is predominantly inter-communal in nature, and therefore where a key concern is that ethnic, religious or clan bias permeates the delivery chain and exacerbates social tensions. These steps were identified by informants to this study and drawn from a review of programme documents. The emptier rows demonstrate again that programmes largely consider conflict in so far as they seek to do no harm or avoid making things worse, rather than how they might have a positive effect on conflict dynamics or peace-building. For example, Vulnerable and Marginalised Group plans developed under KSEIP in Kenya, which identify potential positive and negative effects for each community, only propose strategies to mitigate the negative effects, not those that would monitor or reinforce the positive (Ministry of Public Service, Gender, Senior Citizens Affairs and Special Programmes 2022).

**Table 3.1 Conflict-sensitive measures along the social protection delivery chain**

<b>Conflict sensitivity</b>	<b>Assess</b>	<b>Enrol</b>	<b>Provide</b>	<b>Manage<sup>12</sup></b>
Intervention sets out to avoid harm / minimise negative impacts on conflict dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Outreach, registration, assessment</li> <li>– Clear and consistent communication with stakeholders, properly resourced</li> <li>– Mapping and profiling conflict dynamics and community-based conflict-resolution mechanisms</li> <li>– Participatory assessment of the mutual interaction between intervention and context and its likely effects, particularly on intersecting inequalities and minority groups</li> <li>– Culturally appropriate and accessible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Eligibility (targeting), deciding benefits and/or services, onboarding</li> <li>– Mixed-identity field teams, supported by local officials</li> <li>– Clear explanation of eligibility criteria to communities</li> <li>– Effective community-based validation and monitoring, shadowed by programme staff</li> <li>– Measures that support the inclusion of pre-identified vulnerable people (separate consultations; disaggregated data; targeted training)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Provision of benefits and/or services</li> <li>– Training and supervision of payment agents and performance monitoring</li> <li>– Technological solutions that consider access and barriers, such as a choice of payment options</li> <li>– Close monitoring of financial accountability</li> <li>– Sensitisation of men and women on gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual exploitation and abuse risks; identification of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Compliance, updating, grievances</li> <li>– Rapid response to grievances, facilitated by good record-keeping, multiple channels of communication, effective use of technology, and support for local staff from the centre when required</li> <li>– Continuous consultation and engagement with communities</li> <li>– Inclusion of vulnerable community members in grievance and case management committees</li> </ul>

<sup>12</sup> Lindert *et al.* (2020: 10) note the following: 'Although these implementation phases are common among social protection delivery systems, the intensity and order of each phase may vary according to program specifics.'

	<p>methods of communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Willingness to listen to all parties and compromise where necessary</li> <li>– Careful management and deployment of staff (including awareness of the role played by their personal identities)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Random sampling of enumerators' work to check for bias</li> </ul>	<p>GBV service providers and referral pathways</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Monitoring implementation and effectiveness of conflict-sensitive measures and inclusion, using appropriate indicators</li> </ul>
<p>Intervention sets out to have positive impact on conflict dynamics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Helping prospective clients secure identity (ID) cards</li> <li>– Supporting the inclusion of marginalised groups/individuals in beneficiary committees</li> </ul>			
<p>Intervention sets out to contribute to peace-building by focusing on root causes of conflict</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Communication and training on vulnerable and marginalised groups' rights and entitlements</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Entrepreneurial investment skills, leadership and civic education targeted at vulnerable and marginalised people</li> </ul>	

Source: Country case studies (informant input and literature review; one key text is from the Ministry of Public Service, Gender, Senior Citizens Affairs and Special Programmes 2022). The four stages of delivery chain – assess, enrol, provide and manage – are based on Lindert *et al.* (2020: 11).

Some of the measures in Table 3.1 apply across the delivery chain and are therefore not repeated (for example, the careful management and deployment of staff). The inclusion of others, particularly those in the bottom two rows, is debatable; the sources do not explicitly discuss them in terms of their impact on either conflict or peace dynamics, but rather there is an implicit assumption that such measures may enhance inclusion, empowerment, and social cohesion.

### 3.3 Conflict-resilient social protection

One outcome of a conflict-sensitive approach would be that conflict-affected populations can, as far as possible, continue to access social protection programmes as intended. The conflict resilience of social protection has recently been tested across the Horn of Africa region. Government-led systems have either collapsed (PSNP in Tigray) or been so radically transformed that further collaboration becomes undesirable (Sudan). Where conflict is particularly grave, such as in Tigray, it is perhaps unrealistic to expect that a programme such as the PSNP could have continued. The system was not designed to endure such a shock and should not be evaluated in this light. In circumstances where infrastructure has been destroyed, banks and markets closed, and people displaced on a massive scale (including those who implement the programme), it may be more appropriate to acknowledge the suspension of regular provision and strengthen coordination with humanitarian actors until conditions improve, so that the worst effects of the conflict can be contained and the continuity of social assistance ensured (Sabates-Wheeler and Lind 2021). In due course, the task will be to determine how social protection could help address the legacies of conflict and be both more sensitive to, and resilient in, such situations in future.<sup>13</sup>

Reliance on humanitarian actors is, in effect, what has happened in Sudan, where funding originally intended for the SFSP was redirected after the coup to cash and food transfers for a smaller group of households. However, as in Tigray, the scale of the present fighting illustrates the limits even to humanitarian action. Other social protection programmes designed under the civilian government continued after the coup but arguably lost strategic purpose: UNICEF's MCCT+, for example, was originally designed as a government-led programme but has now pivoted towards direct delivery by UNICEF, with the result that its contribution to system capacity is likely to be less than originally planned. Prior to the revolution in 2019, Sudan had a well-developed social protection system, albeit one that reinforced existing inequalities and vulnerabilities. The revolution then introduced new ideas and values, such as universality and justice, but in the social protection sector these were applied through standard programming models that arguably failed to connect with the depth of desire for change. Those close to the design of the SFSP in the Ministry

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<sup>13</sup> See Sabates-Wheeler and Lind (2021).

of Finance remember a dearth of policy debate and very few technical counterarguments put forward.<sup>14</sup> For example, after decades of centralised control and spatial inequalities in the distribution of public funds, some degree of ‘levelling up’ is now required in the under-served peripheral regions, particularly in services such as health and education, which are fundamental to rebuilding community, society, and the social contract.

Conflict resilience also concerns the ability of a particular social protection intervention to keep operating during active conflict. In Somalia, this is more evident in humanitarian social assistance: neither Baxnaano nor SAGAL operate in conflict zones. Humanitarian actors have found ways to maintain at least some degree of operationality in areas under Al-Shabaab control – for example, by quietly applying remote methodologies, assisted by technology, or by working through customary authorities and relying on the quality of those relationships for protection. Contacts with government authorities are played down in order to avoid heightening sensitivities. The priority is to monitor the environment closely and adjust quickly and flexibly as this changes.

### 3.4 Conflict-responsive social protection

Shock-responsive social protection is defined as the adaptation of social protection programmes and systems to address large-scale shocks (O’Brien *et al.* 2018: 7). When considered in the context of conflict, one danger is that ‘conflict’ is incorporated into social protection planning and programming guidance as simply the ‘new shock on the block’, overlooking the enduring and protracted nature of conflict in many parts of the region, such as Darfur and large parts of Somalia. Rather, ‘violence’ can be an acute shock, part of the characteristics of conflict processes that stretch over a longer period of time.

Of the three focus countries, only Kenya has a shock-responsive social protection mechanism that is institutionalised within the government’s disaster response and financing systems (as is also the case of the PSNP in Ethiopia, see Box 3.2). Kenya’s Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) provides cash transfers to additional households in drought-affected areas, but its response is limited to the geographical areas where the programme operates. UNICEF’s MCCT+ in Sudan has the intention to flex but this is not yet operationalised. Both social protection programmes in Somalia have shock-responsive facilities but these are entirely donor-funded and implemented by humanitarian agencies, and on a modest scale at present. SAGAL has explored how conflict indicators and triggers could be integrated, but for the time being is testing its system in the context of climate shocks. Baxnaano uses a distress index to guide its geographical targeting made up of indicators of food insecurity and malnutrition,

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with Sudanese expert, online, 2 August 2022.



and which could, in principle, accommodate indicators of conflict risk and vulnerability.

### Box 3.2 Limitations of Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme in responding to conflict shocks

Since November 2020, Ethiopia has faced a complex emergency due to conflict and a humanitarian crisis in the northern Tigray region. Neighbouring Afar and Amhara regions have experienced sporadic violence, large movements of people, and other socioeconomic spillover impacts from the conflict. The peace agreement signed in November 2022 between the Government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front has improved humanitarian access, enabling life-saving humanitarian support to reach communities in Tigray.

While the PSNP was suspended in Tigray during the conflict, in Afar and Amhara it remained largely operational, albeit with interruptions. In order to support the rapid resumption of PSNP operations in areas of Amhara and Afar adjacent to Tigray and affected by the conflict, the programme developed a 'traffic light' system: PSNP operations were able to resume fully in *woredas* (districts) categorised as green or were suspended in those categorised as red. Those that were amber were more ambiguous, but generally the emphasis in these areas was on adaptive management to extend as many programme operations as possible.

However, the situation has revealed the limitations of the programme (designed to respond to climate-driven chronic food insecurity) to engage with conflict and displacement impacts. First, the policy intent for an integrated development–humanitarian scalable safety net – which biannually identifies transitory relief beneficiaries and coordinates support from the PSNP transfers and Humanitarian Food Assistance – is still a work-in-progress. Second, it excludes non-PSNP *woredas*, which include areas that have been affected by conflict and have had to rely on (delayed, limited) government food aid. Third, even within the PSNP *woredas*, there is no current mechanism to prioritise people displaced by conflict. These people who have been displaced very recently will be among the most vulnerable. There may be displaced people who are PSNP beneficiaries in their places of origin but who are unable to access their transfers (unless they return to their homes within 12 months, or after two years in their new community). Measures being considered to improve future support to temporarily displaced PSNP beneficiaries include portable client cards and electronic transfers.

Source: FCDO (2022a; 2021).

Key informants identified a number of challenges associated with shock-responsiveness and conflict, such as the separation of social protection and conflict risk management in government systems, where institutional responsibilities, early warning systems, contingency planning, and financing mechanisms all operate independently of each other. Fragmentation of response within and across sectors and limited efforts for coordination of response were also identified as barriers to building effective shock response into existing systems. The Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated that even in countries such as Kenya, where shock-responsiveness is an area of active policy discussion, insufficient attention was given to the necessary *ex-ante* measures relevant to a broader range of shocks, such as guidance, protocols, and scenario development (Doyle 2022; Binci *et al.* 2021).

### 3.5 Conflict-transformative social protection

Transformative social protection measures are those that address the ‘power imbalances in society that encourage, create and sustain vulnerabilities’ (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler 2004: 9). This section discusses the extent to which social protection programmes seek purposely to address the peace-building and transformative side of the diagram in Figure 3.1 (page 24).

Peace-building is concerned with the functioning of society and the state ‘before, during and after conflict’ (Marley 2020: 10). While the term is understood in different ways, there is consensus on its core components, including ‘the importance of local ownership and inclusivity, conflict sensitivity, analysis of root causes, and capacity building and building trust’ (*ibid.*: 12–13). As Burchi *et al.* (2022) note, peace is also an outcome of social cohesion: ‘a socially cohesive society is one in which individuals can have different identities and yet live together in a peaceful way’ (*ibid.*: 1200). It is argued that social protection (especially the ‘plus’ elements – the complementary programmes of support) can contribute to peace and discourage a renewal of conflict (World Bank Group 2020). However, in much of the literature, this contribution is ‘more often asserted than clearly evidenced’ (Harvey and Mohamed 2022: 7). These are some ways in which social protection programming might relate to the three dimensions of social cohesion highlighted in section 3.2.1 (page 26):

1. In relation to **trust**, it could be around: (1) dialogue before a programme begins to explain the programme objectives and how it will function; (2) targeting processes that involve consultation and include trusted local public authorities; and (3) appeals and grievance mechanisms that are rule-bound and accessible to local actors, including both those who are targeted and those who are not.

2. In relation to **a sense of belonging**, it could mean supporting populations that are left behind, making more tangible a sense of social contract based on having rights and seeing those rights fulfilled.
3. In relation to **willingness to participate and help**, it could involve linking social protection programmes with other services and support that seek to foster civicness and local solidarities.

Research by Pavanello *et al.* (2016) on Kenya's Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children found that social protection can reinforce social cohesion – for example, by reducing the social stigma of marginalised groups – but that these broader 'transformative' goals are not being made explicit. Consequently, they may not feed through into monitoring and evaluation, and thus into evidence (Burchi *et al.* 2022). In Kenya, the HSNP's theory of change makes no reference to social cohesion. Nevertheless, the second-phase evaluation (2013–18) found that predictable transfers helped ease stress and conflict within the household and strengthened support networks between households through customary norms of resource-sharing (Merttens *et al.* 2018: 53–55).

The relationship between social protection and peace-building is almost entirely neglected in the case study countries. The near-empty bottom row of Table 3.1 reflects not necessarily a lack of interest in peace-building – which, in Kenya, for example, has been both persistent (Paffenholz 2021) and innovative (Lind 2018) – but rather that where these limited efforts exist, they are taking place entirely separately from the social protection sector. We found very few examples in the three case study countries of social protection making a purposeful contribution to peace and security. One exception, although outside the main social protection sector, is the National Youth Service Cohorts Programme in Kenya, which appears to have helped reduce the risk of violence in Nairobi's informal settlements (see Box 3.3).

### Box 3.3 National Youth Service Cohorts Programme

Between 2014 and 2018, 236,250 young women and men across Kenya participated in the National Youth Service Cohorts Programme, which offered them skills and employment opportunities. A study in two of Nairobi's informal settlements with high levels of insecurity explored the links between youth inclusion and violence prevention. It identified positive effects from even a modest income when provided on a predictable basis. It also found improvements in community security and safety achieved by eliminating the incentive for crime and by strengthening young people's confidence and social standing.

Sources: Kimari (2021); Ruteere and Mutahi (2021).

Another example is the impact of expanding ownership of identity documents (ID) through HSNP's large-scale registration process. The registration was done to facilitate future 'cash-plus' interventions, as well as emergency cash transfers in response to drought. Central Bank of Kenya regulations require account-holders to have identity cards. At the start of HSNP's second phase in 2013, an estimated 23 per cent of the 100,000 households eligible to receive routine transfers had no adult with an ID. The programme supported mass registration campaigns with the National Registration Bureau so that bank accounts could be opened. By the end of phase two in 2017, only 0.4 per cent of eligible households lacked an adult with ID (Gardner *et al.* 2017). In a region historically neglected by the state, where access to citizenship is entangled with considerations of domestic politics and regional security and has been precarious for many, particularly Kenyan Somalis (Lind *et al.* 2017; Lochery 2012), these efforts to help clients access ID cards might be expected to have had some constructive impact on attitudes to citizenship and belonging, although there is no firm evidence of a causal link.

A final consideration is the potential of informal safety nets to act as an entry point to processes of conflict resolution and reconciliation. Community-based institutions such as burial groups, disaster response networks, and customary practices of pooled labour and social assistance are the first line of defence against shocks. However, because of the regular interaction they involve and the joint benefits derived, research in Darfur suggests that they can also prevent tensions from escalating into conflict, as well as normalise and repair damaged relationships after conflict (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 2022). While the same study cautions that community-based structures may also be exclusionary, the potential for social protection systems to connect with grass-roots understandings of vulnerability and the moral economies on which people routinely depend is under-explored.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Tahira Mohammed's PhD explores these issues in the context of Isiolo, northern Kenya: '**The Role of the Moral Economy in Response to Uncertainty Among Pastoralists of Northern Kenya (2022)**'.

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## 4. What features enable the effective delivery of social protection in response to conflict and displacement? What features mitigate against this?

This section builds on the previous one by summarising measures found in the case study countries that enabled or impeded social protection design and delivery in response to conflict and displacement – both during outbreaks of active conflict, and in prolonged crises where latent conflict dynamics are an enduring condition. Two sets of features are discussed: (1) strategic features that shape the design and planning of social protection programmes; and (2) operational approaches and tools that help programmes carry out those principles and objectives.

### 4.1 Strategic features

#### 4.1.1 Getting the overall strategic focus and framing right

The country case studies highlight the importance of responding to conflict dynamics by building on current practice and strengthening adaptive management. Often, local actors' day-to-day practice in these complex and fragile contexts is already conflict sensitive in nature (if not labelled as such or referred to using different terms such as 'do no harm' or 'principled approaches') (see Sudan Country Report, Birch 2022). Supporting this adaptive management – where the delivery team 'think politically, opportunistically and on-their-feet, continuously navigating' their way through changing uncertainty and shifting power imbalances (Christie and Green 2019: 5) – is at the core of an effective response to conflict dynamics. This requires moving from approaching conflict sensitivity as a 'box-ticking' exercise enforced through top-down compliance (see Midgley *et al.*'s 2022 critique of how the broader aid sector has operationalised conflict sensitivity), to encouraging 'culture and behaviour change within organisations' (as espoused by the Conflict Sensitive Facility and other initiatives in Sudan – see the Sudan Country Report (Birch 2022) for details).

As discussed in the previous section, in the case study countries there has been relatively little attention paid to how social protection can maximise positive impacts for peace (as well as avoid doing harm). Enabling strategic approaches could include: (1) exploring the potential of transformational objectives in a

particular context; (2) setting out the objectives explicitly in design documents, including the programme's theory of change; and (3) undertaking in-depth analysis and careful assessments of potential risks, and putting in place mitigating strategies (UNDP 2020: 52).

A key tension in strategic approaches to social protection and conflict is between (a) '“working with the grain” of existing institutions rather than attempting to transplant ideas and institutions from elsewhere', and (b) achieving commitments on transformational change – for example, on gender equity and inclusion (Christie and Green 2019: 7). A conflict-sensitive approach could enable a deeper focus on vulnerabilities that have tended to be a blind spot in aid interventions in protracted crises, such as religious and ethnic inequalities (Wilkinson and Eggert 2021; Allouche, Hoffler and Lind 2020). However, the case studies highlight the limits to donor-driven social protection agendas when government leadership and coordination are limited, in particular at sub-national levels.

Making informed decisions on such dilemmas would be helped by an intentionally explicit and sustained focus on the conflict sensitivity of social protection, which engages over the longer term with ongoing conflict (and peace) dynamics in prolonged crises, rather than as a reactive activity in response to specific outbreaks of violence. There may also be political moments of opportunity when donors can take advantage of increased space for more open discussions on conflict trends and how social protection interventions can engage with those. The post-revolution moment in Sudan was perhaps one example, yet in the social protection field, donors pursued well-worn models but without necessarily seeking to connect with the fervour for more transformative change that was unleashed by the revolution. Another example could be the unfolding recovery process in northern Ethiopia following the Cessation of Hostilities agreement in November 2022. The conflict in northern Ethiopia, as well as localised conflicts that have cropped up in many other parts of the country, have underscored the significance of conflict dynamics and thinking about how social protection systems might need to adapt to these trends and conditions in the future.

One further example of how the framing of social protection could better accommodate conflict dynamics is to consider the regional dimension. Section 2 highlighted the interconnectedness of the Horn of Africa region, where conflicts have drivers and consequences that extend far beyond national boundaries. On the one hand, social protection by design is predominantly national in scope; development partners support state systems that target their own citizens. On the other, there has been growing interest in how regional approaches responding to cross-border dynamics of fragility and conflict in the Horn of Africa can leverage finance and collective learning, as well as linking development and

political engagement (see, for example, Pillai and de Corral 2022). The World Bank, African Development Bank and European Union (EU)-funded Horn of Africa Initiative announced, in December 2022, a US\$1bn Regional Climate Resilience Programme, which will include financing for social protection for resilience (alongside climate risk financing, climate resilience investments and climate asset management).<sup>16</sup> There are also regionally based platforms for dialogue and learning on social protection and displacement,<sup>17</sup> and there are programmes outside the social protection sector that focus on cross-border relations and economic development.<sup>18</sup> In some cases, assistance is extended to refugee or other migrant populations – as section 3.2.1 noted with regard to the MCCT+ in Sudan, for example. There has also been policy dialogue at the regional level on countries' experiences of extending social protection to migrant workers, and of the potential portability of social protection benefits in line with the IGAD Protocol on Free Movement of Persons.<sup>19</sup> Last but not least, there have been initiatives to strengthen regional disaster and climate risk management,<sup>20</sup> including investment in regional early warning systems and capacities.<sup>21</sup>

#### 4.1.2 Investing in knowledge and learning for informed approaches

Donors could also benefit from coordinated approaches and shared learning on how social protection responds to conflict and displacement through donor networks and policy dialogue. One example of a current initiative to improve the understanding and application of conflict sensitivity by aid agencies is the Conflict Sensitivity Facility in Sudan (see Box 4.1).

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<sup>16</sup> The World Bank is also planning a Regional Climate Resilience Programme for Eastern and Southern Africa, which includes support for national and local-level adaptive social protection (Bonzanigo 2022).

<sup>17</sup> For example, the **East Africa regional cash working group** led by the CALP Network, and the **Eastern, Horn of Africa and Great Lakes Regional Knowledge Exchange on Social Protection and Forced Displacement** (both accessed 16 March 2023).

<sup>18</sup> For example, the EU-funded **Collaboration in Cross-Border Areas of the Horn of Africa Region** (accessed 14 April 2023). See also the **list of priority projects funded by the Horn of Africa Initiative** (accessed 14 April 2023).

<sup>19</sup> **IGAD Opened Regional Workshop on Extending Social Protection for Migrant Workers** (Intergovernmental Authority on Development) (accessed 16 March 2023).

<sup>20</sup> For example, the **ACP-EU Natural Disaster Risk Reduction Program** (accessed 20 March 2023).

<sup>21</sup> For example, in August 2022 the Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems (CREWS) initiative launched a **Greater Horn of Africa early warning and early action systems project** involving the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), World Meteorological Organization, and the World Bank (accessed 20 March 2023).

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## Box 4.1 Conflict Sensitivity Facility in Sudan

‘Saferworld established the Conflict Sensitivity Facility (CSF) in Sudan in 2021, building on a parallel initiative in South Sudan. The CSF provides analysis, convenes discussion, shares learning, and supports capacity within the aid sector to help it avoid doing harm and maximise its contribution to lasting peace. It sees itself as a demand-led facility and works with a variety of organisations, from supporting donor strategy development to piloting a national mentorship programme with Sudanese NGOs. One of its early initiatives was to analyse changes in the political economy of food aid since the revolution (Jaspars and El Tayeb 2021). It has also published guidance on how aid can either help or hinder Sudan’s transition... The CSF has successfully completed its first pilot year with UK funding and is now embarking on a new phase of work with the support of a larger group of donors.’

Source: Birch (2022) (original footnotes removed)

A case study on the same initiative in South Sudan sets out useful lessons on how such a facility can support collective action by donors on strengthening conflict-sensitive approaches, noting that working across donors and different constituencies ‘has the potential to create wider impact across the aid system and to move towards a shared understanding of CS [conflict sensitivity] issues and dilemmas’ (Groenewald 2021b: 11). A lessons paper drawing on that South Sudan case study, and others from Libya, Lebanon, and Yemen, concludes that:

A best practice model has emerged for integrated support to CS [conflict sensitivity] uptake, which involves providing research and analysis about the conflict dynamics; building skills and capacities through training, tools, guidance documents and practical accompaniment; and facilitating collective conversations with the aim of influencing policy-level change and supporting collective CS learning and action.

(Groenewald 2021a: 4)

Donor guidance commonly asserts that conflict sensitivity requires grounding in a thorough understanding of the context and its interaction with external interventions,<sup>22</sup> and there has been some investment in undertaking conflict, gender, and inclusion analyses in the three case study countries. For example, in 2022, the Government of Kenya and the UN produced a joint peace and conflict analysis informed by a ‘leave no one behind’ assessment (UN Kenya 2022). However, the country case studies highlight continued gaps in research and data.

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<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development, European Commission (2015: 35).



In Sudan, there is limited in-depth field-based investigation of how safety nets (formal and informal) and social structures connect with conflict and peace dynamics, while in Kenya there is little information on displaced people's movements and experiences. Meanwhile, other research finds that conflict or political analysis is often the least-used information by aid actors to inform planning and programming (OECD 2022a). This raises a number of questions: is such analysis timely and accessible? Is there an issue with internal incentives around using analysis to shape programme design, and is sufficient expertise and time made available to do this well? Or does conflict-sensitive practice entail risks to donor involvement and influence and thus, may be viewed as desirable but counterproductive to maintaining access to certain political stakeholders and processes? The Sudan case study found that social protection practitioners appear to lack a commonly agreed 'clear framework for analysing conflict-sensitive social protection in particular, rather than conflict sensitivity in general' (Birch 2022). Would such a framework help shape analysis and recommendations that are more likely to be taken up to inform social protection programme design?

Above all, the case studies underline the importance of incorporating local knowledge into the planning and design of initiatives. Conflict-sensitive social protection needs to be guided by local actors, with their deep contextual understanding, as well as their 'long-term presence and relationship capital' (see further detail in the Somalia Country Report, Birch 2023, which cites NEXUS 2021a and NEXUS 2021b). Though not directly related to social protection, there are two examples of how platforming local knowledge can have real impact. The first is from Somalia, where health services in conflict-affected Gedo region have been sustained (uniquely in the Somali context) for 30 years through a partnership between district health boards – an extension of customary authority – and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who relied on the strength of their relationship with local elders to maintain access and presence throughout the decades of conflict.<sup>23</sup> The second example is of the district peace committees that emanated in Wajir and spread to other districts of northern Kenya (now counties) in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The success of these committees was in no small part because they were rooted in local knowledge and agency, and thus able to come to grips with what were often very complex and nuanced micro-level political dynamics and decisions. They were so successful for a time that not only were they introduced across a wider area where the state and donors had often failed to intervene effectively on matters of peace and security, but also the state itself ceded some responsibility for managing and addressing conflict to these committees – a 'mediated state' model in the words of Menkhaus (2008).

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with international NGO representative, online, 21 September 2022.

The voices that donors choose to listen to, and the spaces available for reflection and learning from local actors, are therefore key. Sudanese key informants stressed the need for donors to listen to ‘a broader range of opinions and experience’ and to facilitate platforms that enable effective participation, as a critical counterbalance both to prevailing centre–periphery and other social inequalities feeding into conflict dynamics, and to rapid donor staff turnover (see Box 4.2). Such an approach requires the allocation of sufficient time and resources to respond adequately to these voices.

## Box 4.2 Practical measures suggested to improve donors’ knowledge and learning in Sudan

- ‘Closer internal dialogue, for example between development teams and protection advisers, or, if they exist, with agencies’ political departments which are felt to be more in touch with what’s happening around the country.
- Insist on meeting with Sudanese staff and partners during missions, either in-person or remotely, if travel is not possible, and resource the costs involved.
- Commission a small advisory group of researchers and practitioners who have demonstrated their willingness to engage with the complexity of the situation in Sudan to consider how spaces for critical thinking and reflection might be developed.
- Support Sudanese research institutions and researchers wherever possible.’

Source: Birch (2022) (original footnotes removed)

Local actors’ own sociocultural identities and biases will reflect their societies’ structures and inequalities. The Sudanese case study discusses the challenges arising from the history of state manipulation of the NGO sector, while in Somalia, the recently formed NGO platform of Somali NGOs shows how a collective can bolster marginalised representation (see Box 4.3).

## Box 4.3 Somali NGO coalition

‘Somali actors are increasingly organised and vocal, most recently through the formation of the NEXUS platform of eight Somali NGOs supported by two international ones. “Local actors” to NEXUS includes local authorities and the private sector. NEXUS members recognise that they are inevitably a product of their clan areas, but as a collective, with members from across the country, they represent a larger constituency. Their strategies for managing competing group pressures are dialogue and clarity, for example of policies and their application.’

Source: Birch (2023) (original footnotes removed).

## 4.2 Systems and tools

This section summarises five operational features that enable social protection to respond to conflict: (1) stakeholder engagement and rules and procedures; (2) staff; (3) targeting; (4) digital technologies; and (5) disaster response.

### 4.2.1 Properly resourced stakeholder engagement that references clear, agreed rules and procedures

The country studies highlight that policy intent needs to be matched by operational design and implementation procedures. Without clear rules and procedures, effective partnerships and engagement, risks include:

- captured or ineffective implementation – one study (Human Rights Watch 2021) into the Kenyan government’s Covid-19 cash transfer programme in informal settlements in Nairobi found that poor coordination compounded the risks of irregularities and corruption;
- perceptions of ‘tokenistic’ approaches to avoid harm (reported by key informants in Sudan when procedures to manage risk are not systematically followed up with opportunities to discuss operational challenges); and
- misunderstandings that stoke tensions (in Sudan, the fact that a staggered roll-out of the SFSP started in some previously favoured locales led to perceptions that the programme was reinforcing familiar inequalities).

The experience of the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) in Kenya brings to the fore that a critical enabling feature of operationalising conflict-sensitive social protection is ‘clear and consistent communication with stakeholders, properly resourced at all operational levels, and referencing agreed policy parameters, programme rules and procedures’ (Birch and Carter 2023). This involves engaging with a wide variety of local actors (as discussed earlier), not only local-level programme staff and formal political-administration personnel but also other leaders and opinion-makers such as elders, religious figures, and influential women and young people.

One key group of stakeholders is devolved governments or local authorities, whose powers and functions are determined by the nature and extent of decentralisation in each country as well as state–society relations more generally. In Somalia, the relationship between the federal government and the member states is still undefined. This political gridlock has delayed the operationalisation of key coordinating structures such as the National Social Protection Steering Committee (World Bank 2022b). In Kenya, where devolution is further advanced, the county governments are key partners in the delivery of national social protection commitments, which requires the national government to engage meaningfully with county-level political processes (not just their

technical capacity). This lesson was learned by the HSNP, which embarked on a more thorough engagement strategy with power-brokers in the four new counties added in phase three, informed by the problems it faced at the start of phase two when the county leadership challenged the targeting results. Furthermore, given the degree of division and difference between and within counties, this engagement needs to go beyond formal structures (which might be captured by a particular faction, to the exclusion of some stakeholder communities), such as by creating spaces where those who might be excluded are invited not just to receive information but to share their views and experiences as well.

#### **4.2.2 Careful deployment of staff, valuing their skills and knowledge**

Each of the case studies reinforced the critical role of programme staff in carrying out conflict-sensitive social protection – i.e. the importance of ‘getting the people right’ (Christie and Green 2019). As pointed out in the Somalia case study, ‘The very uncertainty of conflict-affected environments requires individuals with the skills, knowledge, and trust to navigate complexity effectively, as well as organisations which give them the space and support to do so (Caravani *et al.* 2021)’. The Kenya and Sudan country case studies highlight how careful management and deployment of staff requires investment in their selection, training, and incentives, valuing their experience and skills which develop over time, as well as paying attention to (depending on the context) clan, ethnic and other identities, and impacts on political dynamics and personal safety. Realistic assessments of organisational capacity are also essential. Good-quality work that is thoughtful and thorough, and that puts the necessary mechanisms in place to turn abstract concepts such as equity or inclusivity into actual practice, requires a commensurate level of investment in human and financial resources. It also requires the documentation of perspective and experience to create an institutional memory, thus providing a critical resource for new staff in positions where there is often a high degree of turnover.

#### **4.2.3 Community-focused targeting and accountability mechanisms**

The social protection delivery chain has flashpoints for potential (in)sensitive delivery, as social protection is inherently political, and even more so for safety nets that represent significant budget to national and sub-national stakeholders. Of these, targeting was commonly raised in the country studies as the divisive issue that risks stoking or provoking tensions, as discussed in the previous sections. Enabling features for a conflict-sensitive approach to targeting include effective community-based processes for contributing to or confirming local beneficiary selection decisions, and for monitoring exclusion.

Kenya’s HSNP experience illustrates how, when there are grievances, rapid response is key to preventing escalation, enabled by both good-quality records

to allow field verification of claims, and senior staff involvement when needed to resolve county-level difficulties. In Ethiopia, the PSNP has demonstrated the importance of informal public authority and the role it plays in lending support and legitimacy to targeting decisions as well as weighing appeals. Trust in systems is thus not only the function of well-designed and responsive citizen-focused accountability mechanisms, although these are critically important. Rather, in places where public administration and attitudes are set by a wider assortment of informal powers, it is also important to ensure that authorities adjacent to the state and programme implementation are consulted and heard.

#### **4.2.4 Digital technologies implemented with an awareness of mitigating measures to respond to new risks**

The roll-out of digital technologies is playing an increasingly important part in improving implementation and delivery of social transfers. For example, in order to reach people in inaccessible areas of Somalia, some organisations conduct the full delivery chain entirely remotely, with cash transfer targeting, monitoring, and post-distribution supervision all carried out through mobiles held by trusted community members. In Kenya, management information and case management systems (for example, using SMS updates, a digital feedback loop, a toll-free line, and an online dashboard) have been digitised to improve communication, and to strengthen transparency and accountability. Moreover, digital payments can respond to mobility and have the potential to respond to displacement. In principle, mobile money (Somalia) or bank cards (Kenya) allow access to cash wherever you are. However, as cautioned in the Somalia and Sudan country reports, and the broader literature on digitalisation and social protection (Lowe 2022), 'digital technologies also present new risks and vulnerabilities, including data privacy and surveillance, vulnerability to network shutdowns, and the exclusion of certain groups or individuals, whether politically motivated or a function of their socio-economic status' (Birch 2023). For example, network shutdowns after the 2019 coup in Sudan affected communication systems and banks, postponing some assistance reliant on mobile money and debit cards (Jaspars, Murdoch and Majid 2022). In settings of particularly acute conflict, such as in Tigray, conflict-related processes (including the shutdown of the internet, the closure of banking facilities, and widespread displacement) dwarf the potential of digital solutions.

#### **4.2.5 Integrating a conflict-sensitive approach into systems preparedness and strengthening disaster response systems**

A key element of ensuring that social protection can respond effectively to conflict is investing in 'system preparedness' – the shock responsiveness of the social protection system as a whole (as opposed to a sole focus on individual

programme design tweaks or expansion) (O'Brien 2020). This is about ensuring that social protection systems align with and (ultimately) strengthen national disaster response systems, supporting governmental disaster response leadership and contingency planning, but working through humanitarian providers where state leadership and coordination fall short (*ibid.*). It may include 'getting contingency funds or partnership agreements in place or linking programmes to early warning systems' (*ibid.*). Any *ex-ante* agreed standard operating procedures should explicitly set out how the delivery of social protection in response to a shock will be conflict sensitive.

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## 5. What can development partners do to make social protection programmes and systems more conflict sensitive, resilient and responsive?

The following recommendations are organised around five common donor functions: convening, capacity support, knowledge management, policy dialogue, and funding.

### 5.1 Convening

- **Listen to as broad a range of opinion and experience as possible.** Facilitate platforms where these views can be aired and discussed, particularly those that amplify the voices of local actors; and earmark sufficient staff time and resources to be able to respond and adapt.
- **Start a dialogue on what ‘doing some good’ might mean in practice for conflict-sensitive social protection,** with a view to both widening interest in the subject within the social protection community and increasing the confidence of practitioners to apply it.
- **Look for opportunities to strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation and collaboration,** particularly between the sectors and agencies responsible for social protection, peace and security, and disaster risk management.
- **Work with other bilateral agencies to ensure a coordinated donor response to political crises.**

### 5.2 Capacity support

- **Explore ways to deepen conflict-sensitivity expertise and cultivate practices of ‘thinking and working politically’,** both internally and with grantees and partners.
- **Ensure that social protection accountability mechanisms are designed with conflict sensitivity in mind,** and are adequately resourced to function effectively.

- **Investigate how current social protection systems and programmes can become more resilient (ability to sustain operations and support) in the face of conflict and displacement impacts.**
- **Take opportunities to reinforce emerging shock-responsive social protection systems, exploring options for how these can respond to conflict and related displacement impacts, as well as other types of shocks** – for example, by supporting *ex-ante* conflict-sensitive preparation and design.
- **Consult governments on what support they need to strengthen data collection and analysis that supports conflict-sensitive practice**, such as evidence on intersecting inequalities and vulnerabilities, or on displacement.

### 5.3 Knowledge management

- **Support multi-stakeholder platforms that bring together different constituencies and facilitate the coordination and sharing of knowledge and experience** on how to operationalise conflict-sensitive social protection and its implications for all parties.
- **Support more field-based investigation of conflict sensitivity and social protection**, pursuing in greater depth some of the issues raised in this paper and their implications for policy and programming. Examples might be the link with social cohesion, or the models of social protection most suited to different conflict contexts, or the relationship between community-based mechanisms of social protection and of conflict reconciliation.
- **Learn from existing grounded practices** by supporting research into the practices of implementers at different levels who are alert to political dynamics and seek to navigate these carefully, but which may not necessarily be labelled ‘conflict sensitivity’. This work should help identify meaningful indicators of conflict-sensitive social protection, based on existing practice and the constraints and pressures that people are working under.
- **Review the incentives that determine the take-up of evidence and analysis**, particularly of political and conflict analysis.
- **Commission some evaluations, at an appropriate time, on the scale-up of social protection during the current humanitarian crisis in the region**, and specifically the extent to which conflict and displacement were considered.



## 5.4 Policy dialogue

- **Through analysis, training, peer learning, and expert advice, develop a comprehensive understanding of conflict** in each context that recognises the breadth of its drivers and dimensions, and the potential role of national social protection systems in responding to conflict dynamics and impacts.
- **Encourage, wherever possible, more open discussion of exclusion and bias** and look for practical ways to reduce it, whether through more systematic application of politically informed analysis and practice, or through closer engagement with, and increased support for, organisations that are both led by and centred on the priorities of marginalised groups.
- **Develop a forward plan which ensures that monitoring and accountability frameworks give more prominence to concepts of inclusion and ‘leaving no one behind’.** In the context of social protection, for example, a more layered approach might focus on: (1) targeted beneficiaries at the core (whether they are receiving their entitlements and the impact of that); (2) others within the same community (the consequences of leaving them out / the potential to include them in future); and (3) wider social dynamics, and how the programme interacts with these.
- **Where humanitarian access is constrained**, such as in large parts of Somalia, **work with other donors to provide greater consistency and clarity to grantees and partners**, supporting them to take risks within the limits of what each finds acceptable.

## 5.5 Funding

- **In relationships with grantees and partners:**
    - **Require that they integrate conflict-sensitive considerations and indicators** throughout the programme cycle and in an explicit way, monitoring institutional adherence to an explicit focus on conflict sensitivity in programming, and that sufficient staff capacity has been allocated to allow for this.
    - **Look for evidence of what ‘conflict sensitivity’ means in practice** for the organisation and its work.
    - **Give them the space and resources to reflect, learn, and adapt** throughout the life of the programme and incorporate this learning into reporting requirements or other grantee monitoring so that experiences and perspectives are gathered – not to measure compliance, but to learn from partners and personnel and build up a bank of perspective and learning.
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- **Emphasise that conflict sensitivity can help achieve existing commitments with regard to inclusive development** – for example, by focusing on intersecting inequalities, discrimination, and vulnerable people’s right to protection.
  - **Consider funding social protection interventions that are also designed to fill key gaps in knowledge** (such as what ‘doing some good’ in the context of social protection might look like) and integrate mechanisms to learn from this.
  - **Continue advancing the localisation agenda** and strengthening the voices of local actors in policy and programme development.
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