

# Emerging Social Protection and Community Resilience Experiences to Bridge the Nexus

## CHAIR'S SUMMARY

Session organised by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), and the Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC) on 19 March 2024 in Brussels, Belgium

The roundtable was moderated by **Habib Ur Rehman Mayar**, Deputy General Secretary, G7+, and co-chair of the Fighting Food Crises along the HDP Nexus Coalition, and brought together the following speakers:

**Sidy Guèye Niang**,  
Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

**Fardosa Abdullahi**,  
BAXNAANO, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Somalia

**Lara Evans**,  
USAID Bureau of Resilience, Environment and Food Security

**Aline Coudouel**,  
Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Program, World Bank

**Alvaro de Vicente**,  
European Commission, European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)

The number of people suffering from severe food insecurity worldwide is on the rise, driven by the compounding effects of the climate crisis, conflict, and economic shocks.

**The Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC) 2023** estimates that over a quarter of a billion people were acutely food-insecure and required urgent food assistance in 58 food crisis countries/territories in 2022. Currently, the international community addresses structural food insecurity and cyclical surges in needs with costly, short-term interventions, relying heavily on humanitarian approaches. There is a pressing need to shift towards more sustainable strategies that leverage domestic investments and national infrastructures such as social protection systems and programmes to achieve economic inclusion and to deliver assistance efficiently. Building upon and strengthening national social protection systems to effectively meet evolving challenges, while implementing resilience-building initiatives aimed at lifting households out of vulnerability, is necessary to reduce humanitarian caseloads over time and alleviate subsequent funding needs.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), and the Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC) organised **a side event during the European Humanitarian Forum in March 2024** to emphasise the role of social protection and resilience programming as strategic instruments to effectively address the pressing circumstances and stimulate coordination across Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus interventions. The discussion highlighted the need to strengthen social protection systems in synergy with resilience and humanitarian programming, especially in fragile and conflict-affected settings, showcasing concrete examples of such approaches from the Sahel, Somalia, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

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## The following takeaways emerged from an engaging discussion

- **Social protection coverage remains stubbornly low in many countries**, and overwhelmingly so in fragile and conflict-affected settings. It also remains low in those most at risk of climate-related shocks and in those displaying low resilience and high vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. Social protection is critical in providing support in areas regularly impacted by shocks. Coverage of core programmes and core systems is essential for shock-response. **The Sahel region and Somalia** were important cases discussed at the event.
- **Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean face threats caused by violence, socio-economic crises and climate change.** These challenges are closely interlinked, creating permanent and protracting needs. State capacities are sufficiently developed to integrate shock responsiveness in their modus operandi, and disaster preparedness funding has made a positive difference, allowing local and national institutions to more sustainably protect and assist people in need.
- **There is a growing body of evidence on the impact of social protection programmes on outcomes across sectors**, including addressing food insecurity, promoting asset accumulation, supporting household income, reducing negative coping strategies, increasing savings, and promoting positive behaviours and actions concerning climate adaptation and mitigation.
- **Humanitarian and development partners across the HDP nexus need to collaborate and invest in their combined potential** of protecting development gains, ensuring that interventions are done in a conflict-sensitive manner to maintain social cohesion, while mitigating the impacts of climate, conflict and other shocks.
- **Investments in strengthening social protection systems will be integral** to the enhancement of the coverage, responsiveness, cost-effectiveness and efficiency of social protection programmes. In particular, expanding the use of innovations and technology is key. Examples include **dynamic social registries**, digital payment systems, and community feedback and response mechanisms that bridge social protection and shock response.
- **Financing tools and mechanisms must sustain basic services** and support longer-term solutions through flexible programming, meeting humanitarian needs with social protection coverage.
- **There is an emerging consensus among key governmental and international stakeholders to move beyond the traditional, reactive response** to shocks to a more structural, sustainable approach. This includes holistic and preventive governance of food and nutrition insecurity through social protection and community resilience combined with shock-responsive social protection and humanitarian response for residual acute needs.

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- **Government-led programmes and systems that help build resilience** and anticipate and protect populations from the impact of shocks must be inclusive, shock-responsive, and aligned to sustainably achieve Zero Hunger.
- **Humanitarian and development partners are exploring the ‘twin-track’ approach in the HDP nexus context.** This approach consists of prioritising and providing support to people in need through national programmes and delivery systems (Track 1), while delivering in alignment with government responses, but using other delivery channels when national delivery systems are not an option due to capacity constraints, impeded access, or security issues (Track 2). This approach has proven to be successful in the Sahel, where **WFP and UNICEF have supported the expansion of social protection systems** through national programmes and parallel but aligned delivery streams, working to simultaneously strengthen national capacities. This approach is particularly suitable for fragile or low-capacity contexts, to support the expansion of social protection or maintain social protection systems in the case of disruptions.
- **FAO, SWAC-OECD, UNICEF, WFP, and World Bank have joined efforts to develop an approach to better support a food security continuum** by combining regular and shock-responsive safety nets, as well as economic and productive inclusion, to both build the resilience of households to future shocks and reduce future humanitarian needs.
- Several humanitarian and development actors, as well as donors, have come together as **members of the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B) Working Group** on Linking Humanitarian Assistance and Social Protection to develop a set of **Common Principles for Linking Humanitarian Assistance and Social Protection**.
- **FAO, WFP, GNAFC and The Social Protection Technical Assistance, Advice, and Resources Facility (STAAR) are collaborating on the creation of an Independent Commission on the Role of Social Protection in Preventing and Managing Food Crises.** The Commission will bring together subject matter experts from across a range of social protection and food crises-related thematic areas to identify the causes of increasing food crises. This collaboration should scope out how social protection can enable stronger food systems and provide examples of where social protection has been used to prevent and manage food crises. The Commission will produce a number of briefing papers, organise dialogue sessions, and leverage the GNAFC membership and other stakeholders to foster discussion and debate.

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