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Practitioner Note 4: Inclusive social protection for forcibly displaced populations[1]

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The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region contains the main host and origin countries for forcibly displaced populations (FDPs)[2] in the world. FDPs are particularly vulnerable to the COVID-19 crisis and its socio-economic effects. In most MENA countries, they do not have access to health services, formal work opportunities, adequate living conditions and sanitation. These conditions enhance their risk of exposure to COVID-19. At the same time, their limited access to social protection systems and responses to COVID-19 reduce their means of coping with the socio-economic effects of the pandemic.

Considering FDPs' vulnerabilities, their magnitude, and the difficulties faced by governments and international agencies across MENA to deliver social protection responses for these communities, the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG), in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) MENA Regional Office, developed a Practitioner Note on shock-responsive social protection (SRSP) for FDPs. The note adopts a definition of inclusive SRSP which, in addition to responding flexibly to support large numbers of people, also recognises that different groups of vulnerable people are impacted differently by shocks, and thus takes into account their heterogeneous needs in the design and implementation of the response. It is the fourth Practitioner Note in a series on SRSP developed by the two agencies, which gathers examples of best practices on inclusive:

- targeting, identification and registration;
- transfer value, type and payment modality;
- communication, case management and accountability; and
- social protection for FDPs.

The fourth note provides a brief overview of FDPs in the MENA region, highlighting their specific risks and vulnerabilities that were exacerbated by the crisis. Next, it presents immediate and long-term recommendations for inclusive practices, along with illustrative country cases. Both government and humanitarian initiatives were considered. The three main best practices identified in the fourth note and some of the main recommendations for how to achieve each of them are presented below. For country cases illustrating the different recommendations, please refer to the full Practitioner Note.

Best Practice 1: Design inclusive legal frameworks and social protection programmes

- Ensure that new emergency social protection programmes are inclusive, explicitly allowing refugees and asylum-seekers to benefit or forgoing eligibility barriers related to migration status.
- Offer sufficient benefit levels to address specific and extra needs of refugees and asylum-seekers, including by promoting vertical expansion of programmes.
- Ensure the legal right of refugees to contribute to social insurance schemes and benefit from emergency social insurance responses.

Best Practice 2: Eliminate implementation, administrative and information barriers

- Adopt flexible administrative and enrolment processes by adopting flexible requirements for identity documents and extending the validity of documents of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers.
- Establish firewalls prohibiting the sharing of information between social protection service providers and immigration authorities, and do not require questions about legal status to provide basic services.
- Strengthen social registries by including and updating data on refugees and asylum-seekers.

Best Practice 3: Coordinate responses between humanitarian and government actors

- Align humanitarian and government programmes as far as possible in terms of benefit amount, duration, eligibility criteria, payment mechanisms and monitoring systems.
- Coordinate databases, information systems and targeting tools of national and international actors involved in the response, respecting data security measures and/or establishing appropriate data-sharing agreements.
- Construct strong and long-standing relationships between government and humanitarian actors though open dialogue initiatives and long-term coordination forums.

Reference:

Sato, Lucas. 2022. "Practitioner Note 4: Inclusive social protection for forcibly displaced populations". *Research Report*, No. 73. Brasília and Amman: International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth and United Nations Children's Fund Middle East and North Africa Regional Office.

Notes:

1. The full list of references is available in the full study. The other notes of the series can be found at: <https://www.ipcig.org/publications>.
2. Includes both refugees and internally displaced populations (IDPs).

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