

# Linking **social protection** and **humanitarian assistance**

Adjusting social protection delivery to support displaced populations: A toolkit

Rebecca Holmes

Christina Lowe

Steve Commins

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# INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE TOOLKIT

The number of people in the world who are forcibly displaced has more than doubled in the last decade, passing the 100 million mark in 2022 (UNHCR, 2022). Such displacement is often long term, and those affected typically live among host communities – increasingly in urban contexts – rather than in camps.

Such shifts have required those responding to displacement to rethink and adapt their approach, and over time they have increasingly moved away from traditional ‘care and maintenance’ models of humanitarian assistance – based on the immediate relief of emergency needs – towards development-oriented programmes. One potential approach is to include displaced populations in national social protection systems and to engage more closely with these systems as a crisis response mechanism.

Refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) generally face barriers to accessing social protection beyond those the host population experiences, and hence specific operational adaptations will typically be required to facilitate their inclusion (Lindert et al., 2020) and to ensure that any shift from humanitarian assistance to social protection provision still meets their needs (Hagen-Zanker et al., 2022a). Ensuring full accessibility for displaced populations can also contribute to a more inclusive social protection delivery system and beneficial outcomes for all.

The practical knowledge of how social protection can accommodate this inclusion, however, is still nascent. As part of a wider project funded under the ‘Building the Evidence on Forced Displacement’ partnership, primary research has explored experiences of delivering social protection and humanitarian assistance to displaced populations in three countries:

- Cameroon (Levine et al., 2022)
- Colombia (Ham et al., 2022)
- Greece (Tramontanis et al., 2022).

An overall thematic paper gathers the findings of these three case studies (Lowe et al., 2022a), discussing in detail cross-country recommendations for assisting displaced populations across key components of the social protection delivery system.

The thematic paper also considers the main factors that influence whether systems are effectively modified to meet displaced populations’ needs. The extent to which displaced populations have access to national social protection programmes in practice is heavily driven by broader legal frameworks. Financial resources and political will also determine the strength and coverage of a country’s existing social protection system, as well as its ability to absorb additional populations and adapt to their needs (Gentilini et al., 2018; Sato, 2022). Capacity is a key factor influencing the effective inclusion of displaced populations, shaping the ability of the existing social protection system to deliver timely benefits, to deliver at scale and to flexibly respond to a crisis. Coordination among key actors is a further critical component (Lowe et al., 2022a). Where these conditions are all in place, operational adjustments are far more likely to be implemented effectively.

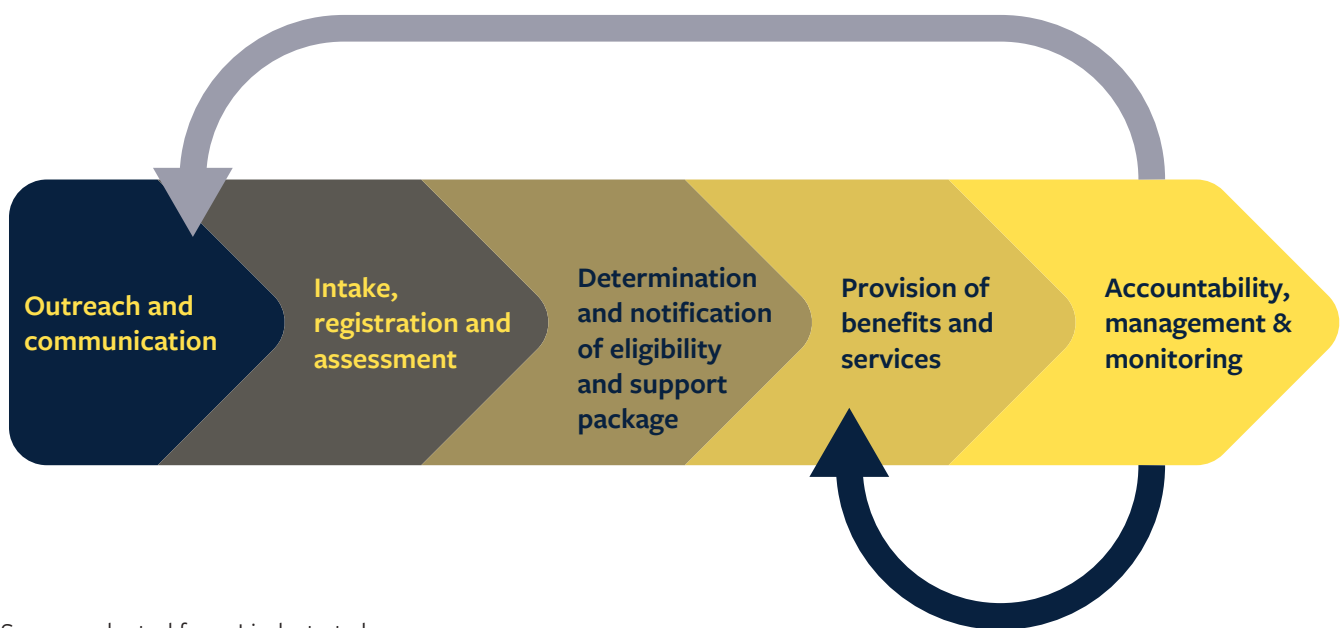
This toolkit offers guidance to government and non-governmental actors providing (or planning to provide) social protection to displaced populations, as well as to those considering linking humanitarian assistance with social protection programmes.

Acknowledging that the maturity and performance of social protection systems vary significantly across countries, the toolkit promotes a stronger core social protection system as beneficial both to host recipients and for the inclusion of displaced populations. Host households face some of the same barriers that displaced populations face, so improving delivery for the most marginalised can help to secure more effective delivery for all. However, the specific ways in which systems are adjusted to include displaced populations can also affect social cohesion. These implications are discussed in detail elsewhere as part of this project (Lowe et al., 2022b; Commins et al., 2022) but are also mentioned where appropriate in this toolkit.

Drawing on examples from the three case studies (Cameroon, Colombia and Greece), this toolkit partners with that focusing on policy and programme design (Hagen-Zanker et al., 2022a) to recommend adjustments for displaced populations at each phase of the social protection delivery chain (Lindert et al., 2020), as illustrated in Figure 1 – namely:

- outreach and communication
- intake, registration and assessment
- determination and notification of eligibility and support package
- provision of benefits and services
- accountability, management and monitoring.

**Figure 1** The social protection delivery chain



Source: adapted from Lindert et al., 2020.

# OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION

This phase of delivery focuses on informing people about social protection programmes – their existence, eligibility criteria, programme objectives and rules. Those implementing a programme are responsible for ensuring that the eligible population (and the broader community) receives timely, relevant and accurate information about provision.

Effective outreach and communication is vital to:

- facilitate the registration and enrolment of potentially eligible households
- ensure that people fully understand (and adhere to) programme benefits and rules
- mitigate the spread of false information (i.e. by providing clarity on who is eligible, under what terms and why), which may help to mitigate both community-level tensions and individual-level concerns about the potential repercussions of accessing provision (see *Lowe et al., 2022b; Commins et al., 2022*)
- increase communities' and individuals' understanding of their rights, so that they can hold provider agencies to account (see 'Accountability, management and monitoring' below).

Displaced populations may be particularly isolated – geographically and/or socially – which presents specific barriers to and challenges for direct programme contact (Lindert et al., 2020). They may also experience heightened dangers and risks in certain locations, or they may face restrictions on their movement. These barriers may have a disproportionate effect on certain groups within the displaced population, such as women or disabled people with constrained mobility.

Our research found that displaced populations are least aware of state social protection programmes when their language barriers are high, their familiarity with state systems is low, and there is little cultural and geographic integration with the host population. Yet even when displaced populations are aware of the existence of state programmes, there can still be significant confusion over eligibility criteria and how to apply.

The extent and effectiveness of official outreach strategies also affect the level of awareness of schemes. Local community networks often play a powerful role in mediating and channelling information to displaced people, many of whom will not have access to the same information sources or channels as the host population. There are also specific contextual dynamics affecting how information is accessed and received by different communities within the displaced population (e.g. women and men), shaped by economic factors and social norms.



## COUNTRIES IN FOCUS

In **Greece**, awareness about state social protection was virtually non-existent among asylum seekers and refugees, while awareness among hosts (of at least one programme) was near-universal.

In contrast, in **Colombia**, Venezuelans and Colombian IDPs had high levels of awareness of programmes, in part reflecting their linguistic, cultural and geographic integration, as well as evidencing strong outreach initiatives.

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In **Cameroon**, women respondents from the host population were less likely than men to be aware of any type of transfer available (governmental or non-governmental).

In **Colombia**, Venezuelan men were more likely than Venezuelan women to have heard about a scheme directly from the relevant organisation, while women were more likely than men to have been informed by an advert (although Venezuelans in general were significantly less likely than Colombians to hear about a programme in that way).



### Recommendations for outreach and communication

- **Identify** the information and communication needs and preferences of displaced populations and of specific groups within those populations.
  - **Consult** with individuals and households to assess their levels of awareness and understand their communication requirements, including their preferred ways of accessing information and their main information sources (e.g. community networks, posters in local public areas, SMS, social media, etc.).
- **Provide** information to displaced and host communities about entitlements to, opportunities for and expectations of programme delivery, including information on:
  - their rights to different forms of social protection and the pathways through which they can access them, tailored to displacement status (i.e. distinguishing between refugees and IDPs)
  - the broader legal rights and provisions that might affect refugees' and IDPs' access to social protection in practice (e.g. provisions on registering for legal status, identification and documentation)
  - other available programmes and services (government or non-governmental) relevant to the needs of displaced people (e.g. protection against violence, access to the justice system, conflict resolution)
  - the wider social and economic benefits of ensuring effective support for displaced households (see also *Commings et al., 2022*).
- **Deliver** (tailored) information through multiple channels, in accessible formats, to meet different needs and preferences, as well as to dismantle barriers such as mobility constraints and limited access to digital technology, etc.
  - **Combine** media campaigns, 'one-stop shop' offices and digital routes, using written, tv and radio formats, and leverage social media and community networks.
  - **Provide** information in all relevant languages.
  - **Form** partnerships with relevant community and civil society organisations for outreach and communication activities.
- **Engage** government officials, community leaders, civil society organisations, employers and trade unions with information and guidance to:
  - **raise awareness** of displaced people's rights to social protection
  - **facilitate** displaced people's access to relevant contributory or non-contributory social protection systems.

# INTAKE, REGISTRATION AND ASSESSMENT

Intake, registration and assessment are the processes through which those implementing social protection programmes gather and record the information on which they will base their eligibility decisions.

Registration for contributory social protection programmes is typically contingent on the individual being in formal employment, which is itself determined by the legal right to work in a country and by access to formal jobs. Refugees – and especially asylum seekers – often face legal restrictions on their right to work that preclude their registration (Zetter and Ruadel, 2016). Yet even when they have the right to formal employment, other practical barriers remain (ibid.).

Both internationally and internally displaced populations often live in regions where rates of informal work are high (OECD/EBA, 2022). They then frequently face further disadvantages, including language and information barriers, lack of social connections and networks, non-recognition of their qualifications and a precarious economic position which leaves them vulnerable to exploitative hiring practices. Across all the three countries studied, IDPs and refugees – and, in Greece, some registered asylum seekers – have the right to formal employment, yet informal work remained predominant, meaning that their registration for contributory social protection programmes was very limited.

For non-contributory social protection too (e.g. social assistance), displaced populations often face barriers to registration, including complex application procedures, language or cultural barriers, discrimination, a lack of information and awareness of their rights, and geographical and financial barriers (ILO, 2021). Existing capacity among staff and resources (e.g. interpreters) is often inadequate to overcome these challenges.

The key barriers to applying for social assistance identified in the research included:

- **difficulty in officially registering as displaced** or obtaining required documentation, denying potential applicants the legal status and documentation required to apply for certain social assistance or displacement-specific provisions
- **inadequate registration of refugees or IDPs in the national socioeconomic information or data systems** used to determine allocation of social protection provision, because of limited institutional capacity, unwillingness to register displaced populations or those populations' high levels of movement
- **infrequent or inflexible application windows** for social assistance and long turnaround times in terms of responding to and/or approving social assistance applications.
- **logistical challenges** faced by displaced (and also host) populations in registering for social assistance, due to physical (e.g. geographic) or digital barriers (e.g. not having access to internet or mobile phones).
- **additional administrative and documentation requirements** when applying for social assistance schemes
- **difficulty navigating unfamiliar processes**, often in an unfamiliar language, with little or no targeted information and support for displaced households (particularly refugees).

## COUNTRIES IN FOCUS

In the three case studies, a range of barriers to registration for social protection emerged (including barriers experienced by host communities).

Registration of displacement status was hindered by factors such as:

- delays in processing applications and confirming case outcomes (reported for IDPs in **Colombia** and asylum seekers in **Greece**)
- complex procedures, limited information, a lack of support and limited access to digital mechanisms (experienced by asylum seekers applying for refugee status in **Greece**)
- hesitance among those applying due to a fear of retribution (in the case of IDPs and the victims' registry in **Colombia**).

In **Cameroon**, displaced households were inadequately included in the databases used to inform social protection provisions, with refugees not visible in the socioeconomic surveys that inform national social policy.

In **Colombia**, Venezuelans were significantly less likely than members of host communities and IDPs to be registered in the *Sistema de Identificación y Selección de Beneficiarios de Programas Sociales* (SISBÉN). They were significantly more likely to struggle with the SISBÉN registration process (although the proportion of those registered in the research sample was still substantial).

Infrequent enrolment for social assistance and long turnaround times after application were also reported as challenges in **Colombia**, for both host and displaced populations alike.

Security concerns that increase the need to carry letters of permission or permits were identified as a challenge for refugees in **Cameroon** (in accessing humanitarian assistance). In **Colombia**, host respondents, IDPs and Venezuelans mentioned the time and travel costs involved in registering for assistance. While digital mechanisms are one way of overcoming these physical constraints, access to and use of such technologies varies. In Colombia, for example, Venezuelans receiving transfers who reported challenges in the registration process were more likely to attribute their difficulty to a lack of access to technology than were host respondents and IDPs in the same circumstances.

In **Greece**, refugees were often excluded in practice by registration processes demanding documentary evidence they could not provide, such as tax returns, bank account statements or a lease in their name. This combined with other barriers to registration and exclusionary eligibility criteria (see '*Determination and notification of eligibility and support package*' below) resulted in negligible coverage: of 310 refugees surveyed in Athens and Ioannina, only two had successfully accessed social assistance schemes.

Refugees in **Greece** were also facing barriers to access the information required to navigate complex registration requirements. These barriers included unfamiliar systems, language and culture, as well as inadequately staffed or functioning migrant information centres and hence a lack of proactive official support.



## Recommendations for intake, registration and assessment

- **Help** displaced populations to register for social assistance, including by:
  - **installing** ‘one-stop shop’ offices where they can register for relevant public services (and recruit staff who are specially trained in working with displaced populations and speak the relevant languages)
  - **developing** formal partnerships with relevant civil society organisations, humanitarian agencies and community leaders, to build capacity of existing programmes, both to identify displaced populations who might need support and to help them navigate the registration process
  - **partnering** with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to take direct referrals of displaced households who had previously registered for their programming and who have given their consent to be referred to government and added to the social protection database (see ‘*Accountability, management and monitoring*’ for more on such referrals and data-sharing)
  - **establishing and maintaining** referral processes to transition refugees from humanitarian assistance to national social protection systems promptly, where such systems are adequate, appropriate and able to meet displaced populations’ needs.
- **Build capacity** in those government offices responsible for registering displaced populations, including by:
  - **investing** in appropriate translation and interpretation capacity (or **partnering** with organisations who can deliver this)
  - **providing** regular training and guidance on operating procedures for government officials and partners involved in social protection delivery (e.g. community leaders or NGOs involved in targeting exercises), to raise awareness of what benefits and services displaced populations are entitled to receive, as well as to advise officials and partners how they may need to adjust processes to facilitate access for displaced populations.
- **Provide** both host and displaced populations with regular opportunities to register in social protection databases, through more dynamic application processes. This can make social protection systems more responsive to evolving needs in the host population, and enables newly-displaced households to request assistance when needed, rather than relying on infrequent registration phases.
- **Allocate** contingency budgets to allow prompt expansion should programmes suddenly need to accommodate new caseloads. This can help address the challenges that infrequent or delayed programme registration processes can otherwise present. Contingency budgets are also good practice in general for developing social protection systems that are effective in the event of both displacement crises and other types of shock.
- **Build** portability into benefits, so that relocating IDPs can automatically access them in their new area, for example by:
  - **making** the IDP and social protection databases interoperable so that changes in residence are automatically flagged in the system when an IDP is officially registered in the new location, or
  - **ensuring** that IDPs can easily update their residence information in government records (by providing information in-person or online via channels that promptly process their request).



- **Support** the use of different types of ID to access social protection and/or ensure that displaced populations have access to up-to-date identification and civil registration documents, for example by:
  - **allowing** registration with refugee ID cards where previously national ID cards were required
  - **granting** a ‘grace period’ during which the applicant need not provide all documents immediately and **waiving** requirements altogether for problematic documentation (e.g. proof of long-term residence or tax returns)
  - **undertaking regular campaigns** in high-displacement areas to issue or missing documentation (e.g. by means of mobile units and partnerships with relevant international and civil society agencies)
  - **installing** ‘one-stop shop’ offices in these areas through which displaced populations can access documentation and register for relevant public services (and recruiting staff who are specially trained in working with displaced populations and speak the relevant languages)
  - **complementing**, where appropriate, in-person services with digital platforms (e.g. toll-free helplines, official apps) that use relevant language to enable digitally literate displaced populations to more easily request missing documentation, and verify or provide updates on their household status.
- **Facilitate**, where feasible, digital access and more inclusive digital registration for displaced populations – and **consider** context-specific approaches where such mechanisms can create problems for digitally disconnected households (especially when these problems may disproportionately affect further marginalised members of displaced communities, such as women and/or households headed by women, older persons and disabled persons). Development partners may provide technical assistance to governments keen to develop accessible digital platforms that enhance registration processes and offer practical support to those who have difficulty accessing digital processes.

# DETERMINATION AND NOTIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY AND SUPPORT PACKAGE

This stage of the delivery chain involves determining which registrants will be eligible for a programme, and what benefits and services they will receive, and communicating that decision to them.

Determination processes may explicitly exclude displaced households from social protection programmes, with refugees and asylum seekers in particular often unable to qualify because of their nationality or temporary resident status (ILO, 2021). Yet even when they are not excluded by eligibility criteria, determination processes may disadvantage displaced households.

For contributory social protection, an unpredictable length of stay and few (if any) years of contributions may disqualify displaced people from social insurance schemes, even if they find formal employment (ibid.).

For non-contributory social protection, displaced households may not be accurately ranked in community-based selection processes because they are not part of host community networks and have few (if any) host contacts. They may also be poorly identified by means of traditional proxy means tests because the indicators used to estimate vulnerability in the general population may not account for the additional constraints that displaced people face. For example, using education level to estimate a household's earning capacity ignores the frequency with which displaced people have to take jobs for which they are overqualified; using housing quality to estimate a household's wealth ignores that displaced households may have been temporarily housed by government or non-governmental agencies.



## COUNTRIES IN FOCUS

Issues with eligibility criteria and information systems emerged in all three case studies.

- In **Greece**, eligibility criteria for many social assistance schemes include a requirement of at least five years' legal and permanent residence in the country, which effectively excludes many refugees.
- Qualitative interviews in **Cameroon** indicated that the community-based selection phase of the social safety net programme may exclude displaced (as well as host) households if they are not sufficiently well known, liked or connected.
- In **Colombia**, reliance on the SISBÉN social information system as the mechanism determining eligibility for many social assistance programmes heightens the exclusion of those displaced households who have not been able to register (particularly Venezuelans with irregular status and those who faced registration challenges).

However, there were also some positive findings.

- In **Cameroon**, social assistance programmes are being geographically targeted based on both the poverty and displacement situations in different regions.
- In **Colombia**, social protection eligibility criteria are designed to facilitate IDPs' access, in line with the country's obligations under its 2011 Victims' Law. There are some provisions specifically designed for them, and being an IDP is also one of various criteria that can qualify an applicant for mainstream social assistance schemes. Consequently, Colombian IDPs in our survey were significantly more likely than host populations to be receiving social assistance.

Once eligibility decisions have been made, recipients and non-recipients need to be notified of them clearly and effectively. The research suggests that decisions are often not communicated in ways that displaced and host communities understand or trust. In relation to displaced households specifically, various additional challenges may arise during the notification process. Logistically, it may be more difficult to contact displaced people about selection decisions since they may change phone numbers and addresses more frequently than members of the host community. In addition, little or no consultation among stakeholders and poor communication about programme criteria and eligibility decisions may fuel social tensions, if it appears that programme places or budgets are being reallocated to displaced people at the expense of vulnerable host households.

This phase of delivery also relates to decisions about the specific benefits or services package that a person or household will receive. The research found that social protection is rarely designed to meet the basic needs and well-being of displaced households (see *the associated paper and toolkit from this series on this topic: Hagen-Zanker et al., 2022a, 2022b*).



## COUNTRIES IN FOCUS

In **Cameroon**, refugees were more likely than citizens to report not knowing why they were not receiving the government scheme they had tried to access. Feelings of being ‘unlucky’ were common among both host populations and IDPs in Cameroon, and also for host and displaced populations who had neither received nor applied for schemes in **Colombia**.



## Recommendations for determination and notification of eligibility and support package

- **Assess** to what extent existing eligibility criteria, selection processes and social protection benefits packages serve or disadvantage displaced households.
- **Consider** whether existing programming might be adapted or new programming should be developed to effectively identify and support displaced households.
- **Consult** with displaced populations and local community groups representing host and displaced populations on the needs of individuals and the community (see *Hagen-Zanker et al., 2022a, 2022b*).
- **Ensure** eligibility criteria and selection decisions are communicated clearly (see ‘*Outreach and communication*’ above).
- **Assess** the potential impacts on social cohesion where existing programme design is modified or high-profile new programming developed to support displaced populations, and clearly and carefully **explain** its rationale to host communities (see also *Commins et al., 2022*).
- **Frame** messages carefully to affirm that new support to displaced populations will be achieved through additional programme capacity, rather than by reallocating places or resources that would otherwise have gone to host populations.
- **Consider** maintaining a visible distinction between existing provision and new programming, where there may strong concerns that displaced households are diverting support away from hosts. Clearly advertise where external funding has been provided in response to the displacement crisis.

# PROVISION OF BENEFITS AND SERVICES

This phase of the delivery chain focuses on the practical delivery and distribution of transfers (cash or in-kind) and services.

Displaced populations may face heightened or different challenges to those that face host populations when accessing transfers. They may have no formal identification with which to open financial services accounts, have only limited access to technology (e.g. for e-payments) and experience security risks, limitations on their movement and geographical remoteness, all of which may restrict their ability to receive benefits or increase the time and costs of doing so (Lindert et al., 2020). This may be exacerbated for certain groups within the population, such as women, who may face increased time constraints (because they bear the bulk of domestic and care responsibilities) and security risks (Klugman, 2022).

In all three countries on which the research was focused, displaced households often had lower access to financial accounts than that of host households, generally because they did not have either enough money or the necessary documents. Encouragingly, households with accounts had often opened them to receive transfers (governmental or non-governmental), suggesting a potential role for social protection and humanitarian schemes in promoting account access. Many of those who had opened accounts to receive transfers cashed out those transfers immediately, however, so higher rates of account ownership do not necessarily signal financial inclusion in the true sense of stimulating further access to financial services.



## COUNTRIES IN FOCUS

In **Colombia**, only a quarter of Venezuelan respondents had a bank account (compared to half of IDPs and host respondents), and Venezuelans were significantly more likely to report a lack of documentation as their barrier to access. In the low-income neighbourhoods surveyed, transfers were an important enabler of account access, being the main driver of account ownership among Venezuelans, IDPs and host respondents alike (although this did not necessarily equate to broader financial inclusion).

In the few cases in which they were accessing the same source of assistance as host populations, displaced households' wider experience of social protection payment or service delivery was not necessarily worse than that of their host counterparts (i.e. for Venezuelans in Colombia). However, when studying the broader range of programmes serving displaced households in the case studies (including humanitarian and joint humanitarian-government schemes), some challenges emerged around the need to better consider the specific profile of displaced populations in programme delivery.



## COUNTRIES IN FOCUS

In **Greece**, displaced households were not receiving social assistance schemes, but qualitative research on the Hellenic Integration Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection (HELIOS) scheme for refugees (funded by the European Union) highlighted some key issues. These included little consideration of the cultural circumstances and diverse backgrounds of displaced populations in the delivery of complementary programmes – notably, the suitability of learning materials with which integration courses were delivered and the need for childcare facilities to widen participation among women.



## Recommendations for provision of benefits and services

- **Explore** ways of supporting displaced recipients who wish to open accounts to receive transfers. This may involve working with financial services providers to reduce account fees or to modify documentation requirements (e.g. by providing alternatives where certain documents are required under 'Know Your Customer' rules), so that displaced people can open accounts and access transfers even if they lack national ID cards, have lost original documents during their displacement or have limited or no assets or income.
- **Invest** in building capacity among those implementing programmes, including financial services providers, to provide culturally sensitive and inclusive delivery, by:
  - **providing** training on the rights and needs of displaced populations and groups within those populations
  - **hiring** appropriately skilled translators and interpreters in sufficient number
  - **responding** to the types of constraint that marginalised groups within the displaced population may face, such as gender-sensitive adjustments for women and girls (see e.g. *Holmes et al., 2020; FAO, 2018*)
- **Ensure** that financial service providers can distribute money in areas with high concentrations of displaced (for instance, adequate number and language accessibility of ATMs, sufficient staff for over-the-counter provision).
- **Design** transfer mechanisms that give recipients choice, empowering them to select the option which lowers the time, distance or security barriers they face when accessing the transfers. For example, offer a range of options for the receipt of transfers (e.g. electronically, at the bank or in hand) and deliver services directly to displaced communities or at locations close to where large displaced populations reside.
- **Refer** displaced people to other relevant programmes and services that are especially important, such as language classes, integration courses, employability support, retraining, protection in cases of child abuse, sexual and gender-based violence, and justice services.

# ACCOUNTABILITY, MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING

This delivery phase refers to the ongoing management of the programme, including accountability mechanisms, case management and monitoring processes, at the individual, programme and system level.

The research found that accountability mechanisms were not widely accessible to or used by recipients and their communities. Both host and displaced populations were usually unaware of or not using complaints and appeals processes. Programme participants rarely held programme providers to account or knew how to formally seek help when problems emerged.

Displaced populations also tend to be excluded from state social registries and other information systems, which creates challenges where these systems are the foundation of case management or the tool used to monitor the performance of social protection programmes at the programme or sector levels (Gray Meral and Both, 2021).

The extent to which displaced households were included and visible in these information management and monitoring systems varied widely across the three country contexts; likewise the extent to which social protection linked with other agencies' programmes and databases to enable case referrals, management and monitoring. Cross-agency and cross-sector referrals and data-sharing may help to connect displaced people with social protection agencies, but should be undertaken with particular care, given displaced populations' protection concerns and their potential hesitance to be registered in state systems.



## COUNTRIES IN FOCUS

In **Colombia**, some indicative gender differences in the use of complaints mechanisms emerged. In the face of issues arising, Venezuelan households headed by a woman were less likely to know how to contact the programme through which they received assistance than were households headed by a man. Among the host population, a lower proportion of households headed by women who had submitted a complaint felt it had been fairly addressed than households headed by a man.

In **Cameroon**, qualitative research revealed that refugee respondents may sometimes feel less able to raise issues because of their more precarious position within the community.



## COUNTRIES IN FOCUS

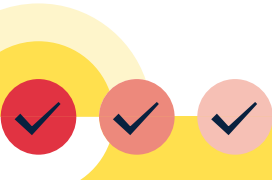
In **Colombia**, Venezuelans and IDPs can access the SISBÉN social protection information system. Despite the barriers to their inclusion, there have been efforts to increase and update Venezuelans' SISBÉN entries, including in partnership with humanitarian agencies. In addition, IDPs have a specific registry that has some interoperability with the SISBÉN. There were even examples of humanitarian agencies exchanging data and referrals with local and national government agencies, and vice versa. But aside from Colombia, there was generally limited coordination or integration in our case studies between social protection and humanitarian agencies' programmes and information systems – a barrier to the effective referral, case management and monitoring of displaced households in need.





## Recommendations for accountability, management and monitoring:

- **Strengthen** accountability mechanisms, so that they are accessible and secure for displaced and host populations alike.
  - **Communicate** clearly to tell programme recipients and community members about the mechanisms available and how to use them.
  - **Modify** complaints mechanisms to ensure that all populations feel comfortable using them. This will include establishing and maintaining strong data protection and confidentiality policy and practices, to ensure either that issues are dealt with anonymously or that the information collected and shared is only that which is essential to resolving the issue. In either case, the complaint should have no impact on the individual's privacy, security or displacement status.
  - **Offer** multiple channels through which to lodge a complaint or provide feedback. Do *not* solely rely on a phone hotline or a single point of in-person contact; rather, use various channels, including participatory methodologies, citizen report cards, specially designed community meetings, go-to committees and suggestion boxes. Ensure there are adequate confidential helplines available to allow recipients and community members to raise protection issues promptly.
  - **Invest** in institutional capacity to respond to grievances, including training staff to address feedback promptly, confidently and sensitively – especially when a complaint is of abuse, discrimination or violence (including through a referrals system).
- **Promote** the inclusion of displaced populations in information management systems and, where feasible and appropriate, the integration of different agencies' databases to meet displaced populations' needs. For example:
  - **Adapt** documentation requirements where necessary, to enable displaced populations to register with management information systems for social protection (see '*Intake, registration and assessment*' above; see also Barca et al., 2021, for more on inclusive information systems).
  - **Facilitate** referrals between the various government and non-governmental agencies that support displaced households, with explicit participant consent and adhering strictly to data privacy and protection protocols.
  - Where appropriate and feasible, **improve** the integration of existing administrative databases, and integrate programme data on displaced people into national social protection management information systems. Where such integration does not pose a risk to displaced populations, consider: (a) whether or how relevant government databases could be made interoperable to capture information on the vulnerability of displaced populations in sectors such as health or education, and (b) whether or how social protection information systems could link with certain aspects of displacement databases (e.g. state/humanitarian agencies' refugee databases or IDP databases), to facilitate the inclusion of displaced households who give their consent for this data-sharing.
  - **Determine**, in all cases where cross-agency or cross-sector referrals or data exchange are being considered, whether this may pose a protection risk for any community (or individual) among the displaced population and whether the displaced households registering for one service/programme understand the implications of sharing their data across other services/programmes.
  - **Establish** data-sharing agreements to secure data privacy and protection for all individuals whose data may be shared. **Ensure** data is collected, processed and shared only with explicit consent, and that measures to protect confidentiality, privacy and security are in place.

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- **Improve** the collection and monitoring of data on displaced populations' needs, as well as on their access to and outcomes from social protection, to inform ongoing and future programme design and delivery.
  - **Include** displaced populations in government data collection exercises, such as regular national household surveys and the census.
  - **Enhance** context analyses of displaced and host situations, including disaggregated data where feasible on type of displacement and on the types of social protection benefit displaced populations have accessed.
  - **Promote** participatory data collection to represent displaced populations' needs (disaggregated by type of displacement).
  - **Explore** the use of digital technologies for monitoring and feedback, to complement in-person channels.
  - **Include** disaggregated data when monitoring programmes where displaced populations are accessing benefits, and to analyse their experiences and outcomes. This data should also be routinely collected and analysed by gender and age at a minimum, to inform appropriate programme design and implementation.

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## About this publication

The overall aim of this project is to better understand effective mechanisms for linking social protection programmes and humanitarian assistance. By providing clearer guidance about when, how and why different linkages might be considered, the project will develop the theory, evidence base and operational guidance on how social protection systems and humanitarian systems can work together to meet the needs of those affected by displacement crises. It draws on a total of six study sites that present different contexts of displacement and humanitarian response: Greece (Athens and Ioannina), Colombia (Bogotá and Cúcuta) and Cameroon (Far North and East). The project is led by ODI, who work in close collaboration with the Centre for Applied Social Sciences Research and Training (CASS-RT) in Cameroon, the School of Government at the University of Los Andes in Colombia and the National Centre for Social Research (EKKE) in Greece.

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This is one of four toolkits published as part of this project. The toolkits distil findings from the longer project publications and draw out policy recommendations for policy-makers and practitioners. The other toolkits focus on contextual analysis, transfer adequacy and social cohesion.

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