

Libya: Design, implementation and child-sensitivity of social protection responses to COVID-19¹

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This One Pager is part of a series based on the report 'Social protection responses to COVID-19 in MENA: Design, implementation and child-sensitivity', developed in partnership by the IPC-IG and UNICEF MENARO (Bilo, Dytz, and Sato 2022). The study reviewed the design and implementation features of the social assistance measures implemented in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region up to the end of March 2021, and the extent to which they took children's needs and vulnerabilities into account.

The severe effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with a prolonged armed conflict and the blockade of oil terminals, have considerably slowed down the Libyan economy. The country recorded a 31.1 per cent decline in real gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020 (World Bank 2021). According to UNICEF (2021) estimations, over 1.2 million people, including 348,000 children, were in need of humanitarian assistance in the country in 2021. Libya also remains a country of origin, transit and destination for forcibly displaced persons and migrants in the region.

Up to the end of March 2021, the IPC-IG mapping of social protection responses to COVID-19 in the Global South² identified only three social assistance responses in Libya. This lack of government response can be explained by years of conflict that have eroded the State's capacities and the national social protection system.

The main government social assistance programme consisted of one-off emergency in-kind assistance launched in May 2020. It was delivered through the *Tarahamo wa Tarahamo* ('Have mercy and be kind') campaign and funded by the Zakat Fund. It first targeted 12,000 existing beneficiaries and was then expanded to an additional 2,000 non-beneficiary families, which included daily wage workers, poor households and internally displaced persons, identified through an on-demand application.

Given the limited government response, humanitarian measures were especially important in Libya. Eight humanitarian responses³ implemented by UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) were mapped. A Humanitarian Response Plan was put in place, coordinating international organisations' activities in the country. All eight humanitarian responses mapped had child-sensitive features, which means they directly targeted children, the benefits increased with household size, and/or they included linkages to health, education and/or nutrition.

For example, starting in July 2020, WFP and the Ministry of Education organised monthly take-home school feeding rations for 18,379 children. Some of the humanitarian measures also targeted refugees

and asylum-seekers, a particularly vulnerable population in Libya: UNHCR and WFP jointly carried out the distribution of ready-to-eat rations in February 2021, directly reaching over 7,000 refugees.

In terms of access to education, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education in launching a 'back to school' campaign in February 2021, consisting of the distribution of learning materials to 112,225 children across Libya. In the first quarter of 2021, UNICEF supported the revision of the cash transfer value and the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) to be used by all humanitarian actors implementing cash-based programmes in Libya, to reflect education costs in the MEB. Two optional top-up amounts were developed for education-specific costs: (i) a one-off payment during the 'back to school' period to cover expenses for supplies, uniforms and books; and (ii) a monthly transfer to cover recurrent education expenses such as transportation and home-made lunches. Both of these amounts could be provided to children aged 6–17 years.

Based on the analysis of the social assistance responses to COVID-19, some of the key lessons learned for Libya in terms of shock-responsive and child-sensitive social protection are the following.

- Most humanitarian measures were child-sensitive and addressed children's access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), nutrition and education. However, none of the measures mapped had direct linkages with child protection services.
- The data collected from registration campaigns for measures such as the *Tarahamo wa Tarahamo* campaign should be analysed to determine the extent to which they can be used for the routine social protection system and possible future shocks.
- Finally, most measures mapped were emergency interventions and *ad hoc* transfers. It is fundamental that the existing social protection system and capacities are strengthened and made more shock-responsive.

References:

Bilo, C., J.P. Dytz, and L. Sato. 2022. "Social protection responses to COVID-19 in MENA: Design, implementation and child-sensitivity". *Research Report*, No. 76. Brasília and Amman: International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth and United Nations Children's Fund Middle East and North Africa Regional Office.

UNICEF. 2021. "Libya." *Humanitarian Action for Children*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund. <<https://www.unicef.org/media/87136/file/2021-HAC-Libya.pdf>>. Accessed 14 July 2022.

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Notes:

1. For the full list of references and a description of all social protection measures mapped, see the full study.
2. See: <<https://socialprotection.org/social-protection-responses-covid-19-global-south>>.
3. Only cash, in-kind and school feeding measures led by UNICEF, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, IOM, UNHCR or WFP were considered in the scope of the study.