Turkey
Approaches to Providing Cash Based Assistance to Meet the Needs of Children in Protracted Crises - Lessons from Turkey
Introduction

Social protection systems are increasingly being used to provide emergency assistance during times of crisis. These systems allow for more effective, efficient and sustainable solutions in delivering aid than creating parallel responses. This report documents UNICEF’s experience supporting cash-based assistance to refugees in Turkey since 2015, when it monetized its seasonal assistance package that had previously provided in-kind winter clothing kits to families. Since then, UNICEF’s cash based assistance has evolved considerably, including from restricted to unrestricted modalities, from more sector-specific to multi-purpose assistance. Use of cash transfers to support education and protection outcomes has been piloted, and UNICEF has moved from a ‘project’ approach to more predictable and harmonized ways of linking with national systems. This case study explores UNICEF’s involvement in designing and implementing three separate initiatives and the main lessons learned including enabling factors and challenges.

Overview & background

Turkey currently hosts more refugees than any other country in the world. There are nearly 4 million registered refugees in Turkey, of whom approximately 3.6 million are Syrians. Just under half of the Syrian refugees (1.6 million or 44 per cent) are children. Over 95 per cent of the refugees reside outside of camps. According to the assessments from December 2017 over 64 per cent of urban refugee households in Turkey live below the poverty line, including 18.4 per cent who live below the extreme poverty line. Increasing inflation has driven up the costs of housing, utilities and food, this has meant that vulnerable refugee households are struggling their basic needs. Given the protracted nature of the crisis and rising living costs, assets and savings of Syrian refugees continue to deplete and meeting their basic needs remains a key concern for a vast number of Syrian refugee households.

Cash-transfer programming (CTP) has been part of the response in Turkey since 2012, initially through the World Food Programme (WFP) and Turkish Red Crescent’s (TRC) camp-based food voucher programme. The protracted nature of the crisis has created opportunities to understand how CTP can support a range of humanitarian needs among displaced persons and children in their care. CTP in Turkey, like in other countries affected by the Syrian refugee crisis, has been a testing ground for innovations, including adopting Multi-Purpose Grants at scale, coordinating joint operational systems between agencies, and linking to national social protection systems.

The Government of Turkey has played a leading role in supporting refugees from the beginning of the crisis. In recent years, regulatory reforms have increased refugees’ access to services and created opportunities for more durable solutions. Turkey’s first asylum law, the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, came into force in 2014 to manage international protection and migration-related matters. A new agency, the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) under the Ministry of Interior, was made responsible for registration of Syrian refugees under temporary protection and other nationals seeking international protection. Under article 91 of the Law a regulation was issued on Temporary Protection for Syrian nationals, refugees and stateless persons from Syria seeking international protection in Turkey. Those registering for Temporary Protection are issued with identification documents granting the right to stay in Turkey and access public services, including health, education and social assistance.

One challenge for humanitarian actors in Turkey has been the lack of precise data on the humanitarian needs of refugees living outside camps, especially on socio-economic vulnerabilities. Unlike in Lebanon and Jordan, between 2013 and 2016, there was no detailed profiling survey of refugees. In late 2015, in cooperation with the Turkish Prime Minister’s Office, the European Commission launched a First Stage Needs Assessment for Syrians under Temporary Protection in Turkey, completed in April 2016. This showed that the living conditions of refugees and asylum seekers across urban and rural settings was precarious and that economic insecurity was a key aspect of vulnerability across sectors, as refugees must access many goods and services they need through the market. The assessment also confirmed that while refugees were legally entitled to benefit from public services such as education there were economic, socio-cultural and supply side barriers to them accessing these in practice. As of the start of the 2018/19 school year, more than 640,000 Syrian children under temporary protection were enrolled in Turkish public schools and Temporary Education Centres but
over 430,000 refugee children remained out of school. More than 80 per cent of those enrolled are attending public schools. The enrollment rate is highest for children in primary school (96%), but decreases to 55% for children in middle school, and further decreases to 24% for learners at secondary level. Barriers to enrolment and attendance include: economic hardship (linked with child labour); distance from schools and transportation costs; limited knowledge of Turkish language; limited availability of catch-up and support programmes; and a lack of information about education rights and services. Needs assessments also highlighted that refugee children faced many protection risks, including isolation and lack of opportunities to interact with their peers, limited access to basic services, discrimination, economic and sexual exploitation and child marriage.

Interventions

UNICEF began providing cash-based assistance in Turkey in 2015, monetizing its seasonal assistance package that had previously provided in-kind winter clothing to families. Since then UNICEF’s cash based assistance has evolved considerably, including from restricted to unrestricted modalities, from more sector-specific to multi-purpose assistance, piloting ways in which cash can support protection outcomes, and from a ‘project’ approach to more predictable and harmonized ways of linking with national systems.

Three separate UNICEF cash-based initiatives are considered in more detail in this case study. The first was a winterization programme to provide assistance through electronic vouchers and unrestricted cash starting in winter 2015/16. The second initiative was the extension of the national Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) programme to refugees, which began in early 2017 and is currently funded through mid-2019. Finally, the “Cash for Protection” pilot programme took place in 2017 and 2018.
Winterization

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

UNICEF’s winterization programme provided assistance to vulnerable refugee families with children, living in host communities across southeast Turkey, to ensure their basic needs were met during the winter months. In 2015/2016 the cash programme targeted those households classified as vulnerable by WFP to receive food assistance. During subsequent winter programmes (2016/17 and 2018/19) vulnerable Turkish families with children have also been included. Recipient households each received one-off payments averaging between USD $80-250 paid in national currency (Turkish Lira), depending on the size of the household. During the first year, all payments were made using e-voucher systems implemented by various INGO partners; in 2016/17 the Government authorized part of the programme to transition to cash payments through KizilayKart (TRC ATM card). No linkages with national systems were possible as the government did not provide cash-based winter assistance for the Turkish population; rather the national system focused on coal distribution.

Prior to 2015/2016 UNICEF provided in-kind transfers to address winter needs. Based on these findings the emergency unit concluded that cash or vouchers would more effectively support beneficiary choice while also supporting local markets. There was also an expectation that providing cash or vouchers would be faster and cheaper for UNICEF than managing direct procurement.

However, UNICEF had to be confident about the feasibility and appropriateness of meeting needs through cash transfers. It was crucial to understand whether households could access markets for clothing, and whether market actors could meet this demand through adequate and timely supply of the required goods at an acceptable price. This required UNICEF to coordinate with other humanitarian actors (UN agencies and INGOs) to share the results of market assessments. Cash transfers also required acceptance from the Government, and cash provision, as opposed to vouchers, was not politically feasible prior to the winter of 2015/16. After extensive policy advocacy by both UNICEF and TRC, the Government relaxed its stance on the provision of direct cash to refugees through the Turkish Red Crescent, which became possible for the first time that winter.

PROGRESS AND RESULTS

UNICEF Turkey provided winter support for vulnerable Syrian and Turkish families to help them prepare for and meet their additional basic needs during winter months. Cash transfers were delivered to 6,700 families with children through KizilayKart (TRC ATM cards). Another 12,091 vulnerable families received support through NGO-implemented e-vouchers.

Since the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) for refugees was launched by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (now the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services), TRC and WFP in late 2016, which provides multi-purpose grants for a range of basic needs (including winter needs), the scale of UNICEF’s winter support to refugees in Turkey was reduced. UNICEF still implemented winterization assistance in 2017/18, using unconditional direct cash assistance to vulnerable Syrian refugee and Turkish households, but the caseload was much reduced, to approximately 10,000 households, due to an increasing reach of the ESSN. A Winter Task Force ensures coordination and selection criteria coherence among all winterization partners as well as with the ESSN. The winterization assistance of UNICEF (and other partners gathered in the Winter Task Force) is intended to complement and fill gaps in ESSN support. UNICEF targets households identified as highly vulnerable but which do not receive ESSN. This may be because they do not have yet have a registered address, or their ESSN application is still in progress. In a few cases UNICEF’s winter assistance is provided as a top up for households who are receiving ESSN, but still demonstrate winter-specific vulnerabilities (i.e. inadequate shelter conditions, living in very cold locations, etc.).

LESSONS LEARNED

Working through partnerships requires less development of internal capacities, creates efficiencies and can help UNICEF go to scale more rapidly. Working with the cash and voucher delivery systems and procedures established by WFP, TRC and other implementing partners saved time for UNICEF. There were no direct tendering processes, as UNICEF relied on partners’ established modalities. It also avoided setting up duplicate systems. In some other countries involved in the Syria refugee crisis response, where UNICEF had to establish its own delivery systems, the time required to assess, select and contract was not always conducive to the requirements of a rapid response.

Vouchers are a more limited instrument than cash. Unrestricted cash was flexible enough to meet the diversity of people’s needs, whereas vouchers, though better than the provision of winter kits, still constrained people’s choice. There are potential risks of distributing cash (for example, fraud or diversion), but strong procedures and controls were established by partners to manage these.
Extension of the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education Programme to Refugees

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services (formerly the Ministry of Family and Social Policies) is responsible for implementing a range of social protection schemes in Turkey. A key area of interest for the Government was expanding cash based assistance to Syrian and other refugees through the well-established national social protection system. Before assistance could be provided through the national system, donors and international organisations assessed the feasibility of using the existing social protection programmes and underlying infrastructure. This required several months of assessments and negotiations, with government departments within and beyond the MoFLSS. Factors considered included the political will for such collaboration, existing regulatory frameworks, the strength, coverage and areas of focus of the national social protection system, programme design features, targeting criteria and processes, cash delivery processes, possible risks of linking with national systems and mitigation measures, and institutional capacity of the national social protection system. UNICEF’s pre-existing relationship with and ongoing work with MoFLSS on strengthening the national social protection system for children provided an entry point for discussions on how to deliver social assistance to refugees through the system.

Within the context of the Syrian crisis, MoFLSS and partners (other Ministries, UN agencies, and NGO partners), initiated two complementary national cash transfer programmes aimed at supporting the refugee population. The first programme is the Emergency Social Safety Net programme which was designed and implemented in partnership with WFP and TRC, with support from DGMM, the Directorate General of Citizenship and Population Affairs (DGCPA), and the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD). The second programme is the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) for Refugees implemented...
in collaboration with UNICEF, Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and TRC, again with support from DGMM, DGPCA and AFAD. To reduce duplication and to streamline assistance, both the ESSN and the CCTE for refugees were designed in close coordination to take advantage of existing processes, systems and institutions. The alignment of the CCTE and ESSN operations, and coordinated oversight of these programmes through a joint governing board, has created economies of scale and generally harmonized and simplified ways of working. The ESSN was launched 6 months prior to the CCTE for Refugees, meaning that the CCTE could make use of the same systems and support structures. This allowed the programme to go to scale more quickly.

The national CCTE programme targets poor families, regardless of nationality, with school-aged children enrolled in Turkish public schools. The objective of the programme is to encourage and improve school enrolment and attendance. Payments are conditional on 80 per cent school attendance every month. The national CCTE was the first centrally organized social transfer scheme in Turkey, beginning as a donor funded project in 2003 and transitioning to full national ownership by 2007. In 2014 it reached almost 2,350,000 children. The CCTE for Refugees, which began in May 2017, is an extension of the national programme. It provides cash assistance to vulnerable refugee children attending Turkish public schools or Temporary Education Centres (TECs). As of August 2018, children enrolled in the Accelerated Learning Programme at Public Education Centers can also benefit from the CCTE. The CCTE for Refugees is aligned with the national CCTE programme and is implemented through the national social protection system, while also using additional elements of the ESSN programme.

The MoFSP required that the CCTE for Refugees be aligned with the design features, rules and regulations of the national CCTE programme in order to reduce the potential for social conflict between the refugee and Turkish communities. After negotiations it was agreed to maintain the same design for the transfer value and frequency, as well as conditionality for payment. The monthly transfer value varies according to the sex and grade/class of the child; higher amounts for girls and for children in upper secondary school were intended to as financial incentives to keep girls and adolescents enrolled in school longer. The cash assistance is delivered every two months as per a pre-determined schedule, with payments in September, November, January, March, May and July every year. Since some of these design parameters may not be the optimum for meeting the needs of refugee children, some adjustments were negotiated. For example, the transfer value on the national CCTE is insufficient to cover the income gap that most refugee families face in meeting the needs of children. On the other hand, applications for additional support on a case-by-case basis (the way vulnerable national CCTE beneficiaries can apply) would be inconvenient for beneficiaries and administratively burdensome for implementers. It was therefore agreed with MoFLSS that those enrolled in the CCTE for Refugees receive an additional 100 TL per beneficiary child at the beginning of each school term. Furthermore, when the programme was extended to ALP learners in August 2018, it was agreed that due to their additional vulnerabilities they would receive the amount entitled to upper secondary girls (i.e. highest possible amount under national CCTE), regardless of gender or grade/class.

All families residing in Turkey, regardless of nationality, can apply to the CCTE programme through Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations (SASF) associated with the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services. The SASFs are complemented by TRC Service Centres (originally set up for the ESSN in 18 locations with large numbers of refugees), in order to diffuse the administrative burden on the national system and also provide more efficient services to refugees. The MoFLSS verifies initial eligibility for the CCTE for Refugees using the national Integrated Social Assistance Information System (ISAINS), which was adapted to integrate refugee registration data from DGMM. The eligibility criteria are: all family members must be registered in Turkey, the family must not have a regular income or social security, the family must not have high value or income-generating assets and the family must have at least one school-going child at the time of application. The Turkish social assistance system generally requires verification visit to all beneficiary households by SASF officers before benefits are received. However, it was agreed with MoFLSS that CCTE beneficiary households receive a visit within one year of enrolment in the programme, rather than before enrolment.

As families need to apply for the CCTE, raising awareness about the programme among potential beneficiaries is vital for success. As refugees face challenges accessing information and services, both CCTE and ESSN have invested in outreach and communication through accessible media outlets, and distributed materials in appropriate languages through the Government and NGOs. The UNICEF website and social media pages are also used to disseminate information. The TRC call centre provides a toll-free helpline for both CCTE and ESSN, to provide information in Turkish, Arabic, Farsi and Pashto, and receive and resolve queries and complaints.

Once enrolled, families receive an ATM card and PIN to receive their payments. Cash payments on the national social assistance programmes are through a partnership between MoFLSS and PTT Bank. However, social assistance for refugees -both the ESSN and CCTE - is delivered through Kızılaykarts (TRC ATM cards) issued by Halk Bank. This is the same payment system that has been used to deliver food vouchers and winter assistance to refugees in Turkey, thus emerging as a single platform or payment modality for delivering a variety of cash assistance for refugees.
The attendance conditionality of CCTE payments is monitored through a partnership between MoFLSS and the Ministry of National Education (MoNE). School attendance in the Turkish public schools is monitored using the public-school system management information system (E-OKUL) which was already linked to ISAIS. To monitor attendance of students enrolled in the Temporary Education Centres (and now, in the Accelerated Learning Programme), UNICEF worked with the respective Ministries to integrate YOBIS, an education MIS for refugee students established by MoNE with support from UNICEF, with ISAIS. Furthermore, since refugees have a different vulnerability profile than Turkish citizens and face multiple barriers to school attendance, it was important to link the cash assistance to complementary social services. UNICEF has therefore supported TRC to develop a child protection outreach mechanism to follow up with families of children whose attendance drops below 80 per cent. The family is visited by an outreach team and a child protection needs/risk assessment is conducted. Families are then referred to the appropriate services, if needed. Follow-up visits are made not only to sustain education outcomes, but also to mitigate any child protection risks and violations and reduce the damage caused by exposure of refugee children to violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect, and family separation. An explicit link between the CCTE cash transfer and protection outreach does not exist in the national CCTE programme. UNICEF is advocating for such integrated approaches to be adopted in the national social protection system.

**PROGRESS AND RESULTS**

By the end of the 2017-2018 school year, 368,090 children had been reached by the cash component of the CCTE for Refugees far surpassing the initial target of reaching 250,000 children by the end of the 2017-2018 school year. Furthermore, in the 15 provinces where CCTE child protection outreach teams were established, 43,957 children were reached with child protection outreach services. Of these, 3,871 were identified as being at risk and referred to specialized child protection services. Building on the success of the first phase, it is anticipated that the program will reach over 450,000 children by the end of the 2018-2019 school year.
LESSONS LEARNED

The strengths of national programmes and systems should be leveraged, and their limitations accounted for and mitigated. Linking with national social protection systems is feasible and appropriate for humanitarian response. Leveraging robust and well-established national systems (strong human resources and institutions, clear administrative procedures, and well-functioning – often automated - operating systems) has been a factor in the success of these programmes going to scale. Time was taken to understand and then address the bottlenecks in existing systems, to ensure effective response. Different elements of the national processes and systems have been used to varying degrees, and were adapted where necessary, and/or capacities built, to better achieve humanitarian programme objectives.

Engagement and coordination with authorities presents opportunities and challenges. There are clear advantages to working with national governments, through national systems. The Government’s leadership in the response from the beginning, their willingness to engage in partnerships with international organisations and to adapt programme design to better suit the needs of refugees has been critical in enabling the provision of cash at scale in Turkey. The direct role of MoFLSS in the implementation of these programmes has been considered crucial by international agencies and donors to guarantee longer-term ownership, sustainability and eventual integration of these programmes into the national social protection system. However, there are inevitably difficulties in setting a design that meets humanitarian needs whilst aligning with regulations or concerns of the national social protection sector, meaning compromises are needed on both sides.

There is opportunity for strengthening long-term national programmes and systems, but this requires careful design and concerted engagement between all stakeholders. A key benefit of this approach is the contribution these linked programmes can make to strengthening the national social protection system – both building capacity of national social transfer systems to respond to humanitarian needs, and
informing and improving the design and implementation of national social assistance in normal times. Supporting the extension of the CCTE to refugees has created opportunities for UNICEF to also strengthen certain aspects of the national social protection system.

A coordinated approach between UN agencies is beneficial. Close coordination and collaboration between the UNICEF and WFP interventions is proving beneficial on many levels. Firstly, having ESSN implementation and coordination mechanisms already in place meant that the CCTE for Refugees could make use of the same systems and support structures. This helped the CCTE go to scale immediately (56,000 children received transfers in the first month of payments). Secondly, alignment of the CCTE with the ESSN has better ensured that children’s needs can be met with the CCTE grant, since household’s basic needs are covered through the ESSN grant. Thirdly, aligning operations on the CCTE and ESSN created economies of scale and generally harmonized and simplified ways of working. Finally, use of common platforms and partners for implementation of CCTE and ESSN has also meant shared challenges and common solutions to problems encountered.

‘Cash for Protection’ Pilot Programme

**DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION**

Under this pilot programme, e-vouchers are provided as part of a larger protection response alongside counselling, case management and referrals, to support child protection outcomes. The target beneficiaries are families identified as medium- or high-risk protection cases under UNICEF’s child protection case management identification system. Assistance is provided in one to three transfers of 300TL ($80) each, depending on household size and vulnerability score. The voucher is intended to offset the costs of accessing protection services; supporting various economic aspects of families’ lives; and reducing the need to resort to harmful coping strategies.

UNICEF Turkey’s child protection unit began considering the potential of cash for achieving protection programme objectives in April 2016, following the positive experiences of its winterization programme (see above). One of UNICEF’s winterization implementing partners, the Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (ASAM), was also a child protection partner, and it highlighted the value, but also the limitations, of the winterization programme (a single transfer for a specific basic need) for supporting the economic needs of vulnerable families with children. Whilst longer-term predictable cash support was provided through both the ESSN and the CCTE, these programmes would only be accessible for registered refugees while very vulnerable households, including new arrivals, remained unregistered. The child protection team developed a rationale for how cash could directly and indirectly support protection outcomes and the voucher component was introduced as part of the case management process.

UNICEF’s broader protection programme set up Child and Family Support Centres in six urban areas, which are intended to reach approximately 89,000 children by the end of 2018. The Centers are designed to provide multi-disciplinary child protection services which are child-centred and family focused. Each is staffed with a team of child protection specialists, psychologists, family counsellors, legal counsellors, disability experts, nutritionists, nurses, case workers, monitoring specialists, social workers and translators. Outreach teams composed of social workers, child protection specialists and translators conducted assessments with refugees living in the most refugee-populated urban areas, through house visits, and the case management centres also received and assessed cases that were referred. Those cases ranked as high or medium risk were eligible for assistance. A priority of the broader protection programme is to support the registration of unregistered families, to ensure they can access relevant services. Within UNICEF-supported programmes alone, ASAM has assisted over 14,000 individuals to register under Temporary Protection. All refugee families considered eligible for the voucher first needed to become formally registered, so as not to set up perverse incentives to stay unregistered. Sixty per cent of the cases that ASAM has supported to get registered have benefited from the voucher programme.

The e-voucher was integrated within UNICEF’s broader child protection programme and was implemented alongside comprehensive and complementary protection services. Those cases pre-identified as high- and medium-risk were visited by social workers and/or referred to the Centres for protection interviews to identify specific protection concerns. Care plans comprising legal and psychological counselling, comprehensive child protection case management and referral pathways to other necessary services (e.g. health care, social assistance, justice, education, etc.) were developed for each family. Outreach teams composed of social workers are working intensively with families, with regular visits once or twice per week. Some 45 per cent of the eligible families were enrolled in care plan in late 2017. By April 2017, a total of 4,110 children who were identified as at high risk during the voucher...
assessment had received at least three individual and/or family counselling sessions delivered by professional psychologists and family consultants.

PROGRESS AND RESULTS

Between February and November 2017, a total of 41,759 protection e-voucher cards were distributed to 18,812 Syrian families which evaluated as medium or high risk for child protection concerns, reaching 106,363 beneficiaries including 57,705 children. On average, each family received 2.3 cards. The e-voucher delivery and redemption processes have been smooth and the payment schedule did not encounter delays. The average period in which the vouchers were to be redeemed varied between one and three months.

LESSONS LEARNED

Capacity for CTP must be built within UNICEF’s technical sectors and their partners. UNICEF’s protection unit found the voucher programme challenging to design and manage, since the team lacked technical experience and expertise in CTP and since there was a lack of global guidance and SOPs for the organization. They relied heavily on lessons learned and processes developed under the winterization programme and the CCTE for Refugees programme.

Combining cash assistance with case management is important to overcome wider barriers to child protection and wellbeing. UNICEF’s experiences to date suggest that the alignment of cash-transfer programming with case management is crucial for addressing the broader protection risks of children. Evidence has emerged that the voucher component has complemented other protection activities – sometimes in unexpected ways – to support protection outcomes for vulnerable. The voucher helps families to cover some of their basic needs and has a psychological effect, contributing to a reduction in negative coping strategies that can have a harmful impact on children. It also acts as an incentive for families to maintain contact with social workers, and has proved an important tool in those early stages of building trust, an essential precursor to effective discussion of children’s protection needs, implementation of the care plan and referrals. Implementing these activities is resource-intensive and requires concerted investment – the wider UNICEF-supported programme is employing 80 full-time case managers, and even then, each is dealing with a caseload of over 230.

Unrestricted modalities would be more effective than vouchers. Monitoring to date has confirmed UNICEF’s concerns that the use of vouchers restricts what families are able to use the money for, and thus limits protection outcomes compared to unrestricted cash assistance. To get around this problem, UNICEF covered the costs of some additional services (such as legal aid and assistance including for GBV survivors) directly through emergency cash assistance - a monthly lump sum available to the implementing partner NGO to support the case management system.

A coordinated approach between sectors is needed to design more integrated programmes. Whatever decision is made about which section takes the leads on coordination of cash-transfer programming within UNICEF, inter-departmental coordination is needed to ensure integrated programming between social policy, other technical sections and the emergency team.

Conclusion

In light of the above lessons learned from the three programme experiences, the following conclusions can be drawn on the implications in moving forward with cash assistance to achieve outcomes for children:

• Cash-transfer programming is a feasible and appropriate intervention that goes beyond sector boundaries and can remove various economic barriers that families face in caring for children and accessing the goods and services needed for their survival, growth and development.

• Cash addresses ‘demand-side’ barriers and can complement – rather than replace - UNICEF’s work in service provision and systems strengthening, which addresses ‘supply side’ barriers, to improve outcomes for children. Strong coordination between sections is essential to ensure well-integrated programme approaches as well as for identification of risks and mitigation strategies.

• Social protection programmes and systems are a viable and appropriate mechanism for supporting the needs of families and children during crises.

• Efforts to link with national systems should be mindful of the realities of working with governments. It is important to consider legal and regulatory aspects and political concerns, which may demand compromises in aspects
of design and implementation. Any efforts to strengthen national systems require careful and inclusive discussion and mediation, and a long-term perspective from the beginning.

- **The time required to understand social protection systems, identify opportunities for linking, engage with governments and develop the necessary ways of working can be extensive.** Considering these aspects for the first time after a crisis will not be conducive for effective response. Therefore, Governments, UNICEF and other partners should invest in mapping and assessing the ‘shock readiness’ of national systems, building political will to engage and understanding the potential and limitations of use of these systems for humanitarian response as part of its preparedness planning.

- **Effective cash-transfer programming requires investment in standard operating procedures, including guidance and tools and build operational expertise in CTP.** Guidance, tools and training should support the identification of the supply- and demand-side barriers to services for children in emergencies, and align CTP with other complementary services to contribute to achieving positive outcomes for children. This must include measures to ensure that the complementary services also have sufficient capacities and expertise.

- **It is critical to invest in standardized approaches to monitoring and evaluation,** that collect evidence on how cash contributes to outcomes for children, as well as the added value of linking cash assistance with other complementary activities to address non-monetary supply- and demand-side barriers to child wellbeing. This should go beyond sector-specific expenditure to capture the range of expenditures having a direct or indirect impact on children, as well as the outcomes for coping strategies and child development and wellbeing.