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Why Are Flexibility and Scalability Important?

The adverse impacts of natural disasters and climate change constitute a major risk to the poor and near-poor. Poor men and women face disproportionately higher risks from these events because of their limited ability to cope with shocks. Therefore, they require more support from social protection programs in order to protect their livelihoods. The increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters make it imperative that governments be prepared to respond.

Building Flexible and Scalable Social Protection Programs That Can Respond to Disasters

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Experience has shown that the faster support can reach the poor and vulnerable following a disaster, the less likely they are to resort to harmful negative coping strategies. Governments therefore need to have social protection tools available to deploy swiftly in the face of a disaster. Social protection programs can provide a buffer that allows households to meet basic needs while reestablishing livelihoods. They also ensure the delivery of basic social services.

Safety net programs have been successfully used in many settings to deliver post-disaster relief and recovery assistance. Recent evaluations suggest that countries that have established regular social protection programs or institutions are better prepared to respond to shocks and to absorb dedicated donor funding. Countries whose social protection programs include specific disaster response mechanisms, including administrative systems and coordination mechanisms, are better positioned to respond to shocks and disasters, particularly to scale up and extend programming as illustrated by Turkey's response to the 1999 earthquake (Box 1).

Social protection programs can buffer regular beneficiaries of social assistance from the impacts of disasters. They can also temporarily expand coverage to a wider group of vulnerable people, preventing significant increases in the number of people needing such assistance over the medium to long term.

Box 1. Turkey's emergency earthquake recovery project

On August 17, 1999, a 7.6 magnitude earthquake struck the Marmara region of northwestern Turkey, killing more than 17,000 people, injuring nearly 44,000, and leaving about half a million people homeless. The earthquake also caused considerable damage in Istanbul, about 70 kilometers from the earthquake's epicenter.

The World Bank's $252.5 million Emergency Recovery Loan helped the government respond quickly to the disaster by providing cash assistance to victims for accommodations (75 percent of total benefits); home repairs (13 percent); death and disability benefits (10 percent); and death benefit, survivor, and disability pensions (1.5 percent). Affected business owners also received lump-sum payments.

A beneficiary assessment of cash transfers reported that 85 percent of people who received rent support believed it had saved them from total devastation.

Implementation was possible largely because the distribution infrastructure already existed and was functioning relatively well. The primary distribution agency, for example, was already set up to disburse payments through its network of more than 900 offices.   — Source: IEG 2011.

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In several successful social safety net programs, a national warning system triggers built-in disaster response mechanisms. A key feature of most of these mechanisms is the ability to scale up assistance beyond the core target group, usually the chronically poor, to include people who are impoverished transitionally. The cost of identifying additional beneficiaries and expanding coverage of a social protection program can be minimal.

Key Considerations for Creating a Scalable and Flexible Social Protection Program

Scaling up is critical following a disaster. To avoid problems associated with outreach and communication, coverage, and quality controls, practitioners needs to take the following steps:

- Create an enabling environment that facilitates institutional coordination between actors as well as partnerships between the public and private sectors.

- Manage and allocate resources so that they can be rapidly and effectively deployed. Identify and reach out to target groups using existing data sources, periodic reassessments, and mobile facilities.

Facilitating Institutional Coordination

Institutional capacity determines the speed, effectiveness, and efficiency with which social protections operate following a disaster. Response mechanisms can be centralized or decentralized, depending on the relative strength of public, private, and civil society organizations. The key is to have the groundwork laid so that existing institutional capacity can be fully exploited.

Case studies of Mexico's Program de Empleo Temporal (PET) and Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) suggest that coordinating safety net support through a single central agency, which works closely with other national agencies and subnational authorities, is more effective than putting multiple agencies in charge. Ensuring adequate numbers of trained staff at each level to implement scaled up is also critical, as is an ongoing program of capacity development, including training and refurbishment of equipment and materials.

Successful scale up also involves partnerships and coordination among private/public service providers, agencies, ministries and development partners. Partnership agreements must be in place between agencies/actors and the service providers best positioned to perform outreach and deliver benefits and services. Governments that have partnered innovatively with banks, cell phone companies, and other members of the private sector have had much success in responding to disasters.

Scaled-up programs should be able to use a combination of methods of delivery and outreach, relying on community structures and mobile program offices to adjust to the specific characteristics, locations, and needs of the population (Box 4). In Mexico, the PET program uses public, private, and community-

Box 2.

Figure 1. One-Stop Shop Registration and Payment Process in Pakistan's Citizen Damage Compensation Programme

based modalities to make payments to beneficiaries depending on the volume of transactions and the connectivity of the locality to intermediary institutions. In some rural and isolated localities, payments are made through community committees, which receive the case from the central agency. In other places, cash is disbursed through post offices or local bank branches.

Three tasks are critical to establishing an institutional coordination mechanism:

- creating formal communication channels and linkages among social protection, disaster management and other sectoral ministries/agencies, including those responsible for early warning systems

- defining the roles and responsibilities of different ministries/agencies and other implementing partners

- establishing linkages or information-sharing arrangements with the broader humanitarian response system.

Mexico's PET uses an institutional coordination model that is grounded in a clear legal framework (Box 2 and Figure 1). Legislation spells out the responsibilities of each party and even names coordination mechanisms. Data from the early warning system data are disseminated among the implementing ministries, allowing them to prepare their response, scale up PET, or use other channels to meet the social protection needs of affected localities. Every ministry collaborating under the PET must fund and implement its individual portion of the program.

Mobilizing Financial and Human Resources

Disaster-prone countries that have developed disaster response mechanisms linked to social protection systems in advance have been largely successful in mounting large, effective, coordinated,

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Box 3. Institutional coordination in Mexico's Programa de Empleyo Temporal

Mexico Programa de Empleyo Temporal (PET) is an interagency program overseen by the Ministry of Social Welfare (SEDESOL) and implemented by several sector ministries and agencies. The Ministry of the Interior (SEGOB) oversees the coordinated institutional response to natural disasters and manages the Natural Disasters Fund (FONDEN). The General Directorate for Attention to Priority Groups (DGAGP) of SEDESOL is a cosignatory to a parliamentary act with SEGOB's General Directory for Civil Protection, the department in charge of the national government's emergency and recovery response to natural disasters. A PET technical commission is tasked with strengthening institutional coordination in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the program, as well as coordinating resources to maximize socioeconomic impact. The commission comprises the heads of the following undersecretariats: Human and Social Development; SEDESOL; Environmental Policy and Planning; Environment and Natural Resources; Infrastructure, Communications and Transport; Employment and Labor Productivity; and Labor and Social Security. A PET Permanent Working Group conducts research activities in support of the commission.

Figure 2. Organizational Chart for Mexico's Programa de Empleyo Temporal (PET) at the Federal Level

and rapid responses. Experience from various countries suggests that establishing early warning systems, contingency financing, contingency plans and institutional capacity ahead of the crisis can significantly compress the typical timeline for humanitarian response.

The following steps are needed to put such a mechanism in place:

- *Establish contingency budgets.* The timeliness and effectiveness of a response depends on the availability of financing to scale up existing programs. A policy framework is needed that identifies the sources of financing and allocates financing to programs to be triggered under specific circumstances. Under such a mechanism, relevant institutions and implementing agencies get access to funding instantaneously when an emergency is declared.

- *Provide guidelines on the administration of the contingency financing.* The national disaster preparedness plan must detail systems and procedures; assign roles and responsibilities to different agencies; allocate funding for post disaster activities; and rely on existing systems of targeting, delivery, and reporting (Pelham, Clay, and

Braunholz 2011). Such a plan also serves as a platform for collaboration between stakeholders.

- *Build response capacity and train personnel.* After a disaster, trained personnel should be rapidly deployed to assess damage, establish temporary registration/ information centers, enroll or certify beneficiaries for claims and benefits, make payments, and audit accounts. Mexico's PET and Pakistan's Citizen Damage Compensation Programme (CDCP) rely on mobile local information centers/desks to enroll beneficiaries, make payments, and accept grievance reports. In Mexico, once the early warning information on the probable impact of the disaster is made public, PET emergency response teams set up information/registration desks within each municipality to perform visual assessments and interview household heads. These teams are recruited and trained by the PET administration.

Box 4. Making funds available immediately following crises

Programs in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Mexico, and Pakistan all have disaster contingency plans that quickly make resources available during emergencies.

Bangladesh's National Disaster Management Strategy

Despite weaknesses, the National Disaster Management Strategy in Bangladesh made it possible to respond to Cyclone Sidr in 2007 and evacuate and reaccommodate 4.5 million citizens within five days)

Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme

The annual budget of Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) includes a contingency budget equivalent to 20 percent of the base program cost and a risk financing facility designed to respond to transitory needs in chronically food-insecure districts (*woredas*) when larger shocks occur. Of the contingency budget, 15 percent is held at the regional level and 5 percent at the *woreda* (district) level. Both are used to address unexpected needs of chronically food-insecure households as well as transitory food insecurity among PSNP and non–PSNP households in PSNP–supported *woredas*. If these funds are not used during the fiscal year, they are rolled over.

If a shock is too large to be handled by the contingency fund, the Risk Financing Facility (RFF), established in 2009, responds. The RFF is based on four principles: contingent emergency grant financing from an external partner; the use of the government's early warning system, which triggers a response; contingency planning in *woredas*; and adequate institutional capacity at all levels.

In 2011, the PSNP extended the duration of its regular support for 6.5 million beneficiaries and provided an extra three months of assistance to an additional 3.1 million people living in PSNP areas. The process from triggering the RFF to payment of benefits took less than two months on average—a much faster response than the humanitarian assistance system, which took several months to assess the crisis, mobilize funding, and respond to needs.

Mexico Programa de Empleyo Temporal (PET)

The Programa de Empleyo Temporal (PET) is part of the Mexican government's annual budgeting and financing process. The "emergency" PET (PETi), an emergency response mechanism and contingency financing, was added as a subcomponent in 2003 to ensure timely and efficient response to shock-affected people. The mechanism operates inside the broader PET framework but has modified systems and procedures for a postdisaster context. These procedures were designed based on PET's experience of working with poor and marginalized people to protect and restore their assets. At least 20 percent of its program budget is reserved for responding to emergency situations. This figure is deemed sufficient to respond to higher-frequency events (such as hurricanes, flooding) of low to medium impact. If this funding is not adequate, Mexico's Fund for Natural Disasters (FONDEN) can provide supplementary resources.

Pakistan's Citizen Damage Compensation Programme

Based on its experience with the Citizen Damage Compensation Programme, in 2012 the government of Pakistan developed an Action Plan for Early Recovery in Future Disasters. The plan details the roles and responsibilities of several collaborating agencies during emergencies.

Managing Fiduciary Risks

One of the challenges of providing social protection after disasters is the need to balance a timely with response with ensuring accountability and avoiding waster. Disaster preparedness plans should include emergency guidelines that for existing financial management and procurement procedures and emphasize internal and external communication on program guidelines.

Three steps are particularly important in managing fiduciary risks:

- *Establish transparent and standardized administrative processes for selecting beneficiaries and disbursing benefits.* In disaster-prone areas, advance planning on administrative processes for beneficiary selection and allocation of resources is key for ensuring transparent and sound business practices. Guidelines that articulate these processes should be made available to all implementing partners and beneficiaries using the communication methods most widely used and accessible to the affected population. These methods include operational manuals, posters, radio or TV announcements, and community assemblies in local languages.

- *Establish community-based feedback mechanisms* that invite community members to report on program implementation and any fraud, corruption, or malpractice. Feedback can be collected through various means, such as telephone hotlines, SMSs, community focal points, and local program offices, as well as through standard monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tools, such as social audits and beneficiary assessments. Social protection programs in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Mexico, and Pakistan illustrate effective use of various feedback mechanisms including grievance systems.

- *Establish transparent audit and accountability mechanisms.* Disaster preparedness guidelines should detail how each implementing agency should report its activities and expenditures to a coordination/administration unit. Independent auditors and spot checks should be used. Roving teams should verify accounts and facilitate disbursements.

Using a Management Information System to Identify, Register, and Track Beneficiaries

A management information system that is accessible to several agencies and contains basic poverty and geographic location data on social protection program beneficiaries is an essential asset for ensuring a rapid response. It should allow implementers to identify poor and vulnerable populations at greatest risk from a slow-onset event, giving responders a head-start in implementing the program.

A beneficiary database also provides a baseline for the target population and serves as a platform for periodic retargeting to correct inclusion and exclusion errors and respond to changes in the relative welfare of the households. The administrator of the database needs access to resources to field follow-up assessments in affected areas, to ensure that potential beneficiaries are not missed and that undeserving individuals/households do not continue to receive benefits.

Tips for Practitioners: Principles and Good Practice to Follow to Scale up Social Protection Programs to Respond to Disasters

The following tips can help practitioners scale up social protection programs' efforts to respond to disaster and climate risks:

1. Put in place contingency funds, disaster preparedness plans, and disaster response mechanisms to protect the assets of existing beneficiaries and expand coverage to other vulnerable people affected by the event.

2. In countries at higher risk of disaster impacts, create disaster response structures and procedures within social protection programs.

3. Have in place a legislative and/or policy framework that identifies the key institutional actors in disaster response and assigns roles, responsibilities, and financing.

4. Build physical, technical, and surge capacity for disaster response in countries at risk.

5. Be able to conduct needs assessments and reassessments of affected populations, by establishing partnership agreements with service providers that can be modified according to needs in the aftermath of a disaster.

6. Establish a beneficiary outreach mechanism that ensures that populations in isolated locations and socially marginalized groups have information and access to post-disaster program benefits.

7. Set up user-friendly registration systems. Forms and information should be clear, simple, and easy to use; they should be provided in multiple languages if necessary and possible. Post-disaster registration centers should be established as close to the disaster sites as possible. Mobile registration and community facilitation teams should also ensure outreach to people who cannot come to registration centers, in order to identify households that may have been missed.

Box 5. Pakistan's National Database Registration Authority (NADRA)

Pakistan's Citizen Damage Compensation Programme (CDCP) benefitted greatly from the National Database Registration Authority (NADRA). It maintains civil registration data on more than 96 million citizens in Pakistan and abroad, as well as a database of the beneficiaries of an ongoing national social safety net program.

The CDCP made use of both databases to identify its beneficiary pool. NADRA also helped CDCP refine its eligibility criteria by triangulating household data with other disaster specific eligibility criteria to verify beneficiary eligibility. Over the two phases of the CDCP, NADRA helped identify, verify, and register more than 2 million beneficiary households, issuing ID cards or automatic payment cards (Watan cards).

NADRA was established in 2000, with a mandate to develop a system for reregistering 150 million citizens. It started the task in March 2000, quickly establishing all essential support systems to more than 96 million citizens in Pakistan and abroad. It also issued secure computerized national identity cards. NADRA also provides data management services to other government departments. It works with the Benazir Income Support Program, for example, to develop and populate the database for the nationwide household poverty survey.

8. Take into consideration cultural sensitivities, mobility constraints, and related issues in registering beneficiaries, in order to avoid perpetuating the discriminatory or exclusive practices of existing programs. Establish a database for identifying and tracking beneficiaries that can be used by agencies at all levels. A central agency should be charged with administering and updating a program beneficiary database. Ideally, this database should have links to other safety net program databases and a larger population database, such as a civil registry.

9. Maintain financial control, through audit and accountability mechanisms that reduce the fiduciary risks associated with scaling up. Rely on flexible mechanisms, such as mobile teams, spot audits, and community structures that can be mobilized rapidly. Feed data to program administrators to adjust program implementation.

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