

Strengthening inclusive social protection systems for displaced children and their families

Rebecca Holmes and Christina Lowe

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About this publication

This output was written between June-September 2022 with funding from PROSPECTS. PROSPECTS is a multi-year (2019–2023), multi-stakeholder partnership funded by the Government of the Netherlands, working together with the International Finance Corporation (IFC), International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank. By bridging economic, social, development and humanitarian action, PROSPECTS amplifies existing programmes, takes advantage of synergies and complementarities in mandates and provides a platform to test and scale new approaches that have transformative potential. The project aims to help transform the way governments and other stakeholders, including the private sector, respond to the displacement crises in eight countries in the Middle East and North Africa and in the Horn of Africa (Egypt, Ethiopia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Sudan and Uganda).

The aim of this work is to generate and consolidate evidence and knowledge to help build an investment case for inclusion of displaced persons in social protection systems and/or enhancing their access to social protection – from an equity and child's perspective. It is informed by the

outcomes of the 2017 International Conference on Social Protection in contexts of Fragility & Forced Displacement, which identified critical evidence gaps in the area of social protection and forced displacement and recommended making an investment case for designing and expanding inclusive social protection systems.

Key messages

Forty-one percent of the world's displaced people are children. Many live in protracted displacement of more than five years, equating to at least a quarter of their childhoods – and often much more. Ensuring that displaced children are properly supported during this window can be instrumental in improving their entire life trajectory.

Displaced children and families are a uniquely vulnerable population, due to the disruption and trauma of the displacement itself, as well as the family's reduced access to services, community networks, economic opportunities and broader rights in the new place of residence. Displaced children are more likely to live in poverty, lack food security, miss out on school, work in hazardous conditions, suffer from ill health and experience violence, exploitation and abuse. In many cases, these risks compound over time, and can permanently derail children's life opportunities.

Short-term humanitarian programming is not well suited to protect refugee and internally displaced children effectively against the threats they face in protracted contexts and the longer-term devastation to their life opportunities. Unpredictable and ad hoc assistance cannot properly address the structural barriers confronting displaced children and families, and leaves them unable to invest in rebuilding their lives in a meaningful manner. It may also leave host communities feeling neglected, since they are not always the principal focus of the humanitarian response.

Developing stronger, inclusive social protection systems that support both host and displaced children and families can play an important role in improving the outcomes of both communities and in establishing a more effective, coherent and sustainable displacement response. If well designed and reliably delivered, social protection can reduce poverty and vulnerability by facilitating access to basic services, improving the wellbeing of children and their parents and reducing the need to resort to detrimental coping strategies. Investments in inclusive social protection systems also have the potential to generate wider economic, social and institutional benefits for the host society, economy and state.

However, at present there are major gaps in the coverage, adequacy, comprehensiveness and inclusiveness of national social protection systems. Substantial political and financial investment is required for such systems to deliver adequate and effective benefits for all, and for them to be adapted to consider the specific needs of displaced children and families. As is true for the host population, a comprehensive approach is needed to tackle the complex challenges that displaced children and families face. This means combining income support with enhanced access to education and health services, as well as childcare, skills development and decent work opportunities for parents and young adults. It also means linking social protection with specialised complementary programming to support equality and empowerment and to reduce risks across the life course, for example through child protection, psychosocial support and gender-based violence services.

Many of the countries studied in this paper are making important progress towards realising these benefits by investing in the development of systems to support displaced and host communities, often in collaboration with international partners. Yet, efforts to date are often nascent or focus on only

a limited region or subset of children and families. These initiatives are also being developed amidst a barrage of additional challenges, which exacerbate the already difficult political economy surrounding the expansion of provision. While such challenges threaten progress, they also reinforce the need for developing strong, universal social protection systems.

Reinforced efforts are therefore critical, to build on existing momentum and to convert existing initiatives into sustained inclusion that achieves concrete impacts in practice. Achieving this progress requires investment in the inclusion of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) as part of a broader strategy to promote universal access to comprehensive and shock-responsive social protection systems. It requires innovative and long-term financing strategies to be prioritised through domestic budget allocation as well as fulfilment of existing financing commitments by the international community. Moreover, it demands efforts to strengthen the enabling political environment, and to adapt social protection policies, programmes and delivery systems so that they can effectively meet the needs of displaced children and families – and realise benefits for the host population too.

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Acronyms

AIR	American Institutes of Research
CCTE	Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (Turkey)
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
CSO	civil society organisation
CSSP	Child-Sensitive Social Protection programme (Uganda)
DRDIP	Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (Uganda)
DSI	Durable Solutions Initiative
EBA	Swedish Expert Group for Aid Studies
ECD	Early Childhood Development
GBV	gender-based violence
GCOFF	World Bank Global Concessional Financing Facility
GEG	Girls Empowering Girls programme (Uganda)
IDA	International Development Association
IDP	internally displaced person
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPC-IG	International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ISPA	Inter-Agency Social Protection Assessment
KII	key informant interview
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
MOLSA	Iraq Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
MOMD	Iraq Ministry of Migration and Displacement
MoSD	Ministry of Social Development
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NHIF	National Hospital Insurance Fund (Kenya); National Health Insurance Fund (Sudan)
NSSF	National Social Security Fund

NUSAF	National Ugandan Social Action Fund
PDS	Public Distribution System (Iraq)
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Programme (Ethiopia)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SFSP	Sudan Family Support Programme
SGBV	sexual and gender-based violence
SPIAC-B	Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board
SSN	Social Safety Net (Iraq)
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees
UPSNP	Urban Productive Safety Net Project (Ethiopia)
USP2030	Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive summary

The past five years have seen important momentum in support of inclusive social protection systems¹ to progress towards universal coverage and more adequate support for a diverse range of needs. Among those most in need are over 40 million children who are currently displaced within their own country or elsewhere in the world, having fled their homes due to conflict, violence and other crises. In many parts of the world, national governments and international partners alike are recognising the importance of inclusive social protection systems for addressing these displacement challenges, seeing the benefits that they can bring not only in meeting the urgent needs of children and families in displaced and host communities, but also for promoting longer-term economic and social prosperity. Building on an array of international commitments, from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection to the Grand Bargain and Global Compact on Refugees, investments in policies and programmes to better support children and families from host and displaced communities are on the rise.

However, many of these initiatives are still only at a nascent stage. Some exist only on paper. Others have begun to be implemented but are typically fully donor-financed and reach only a limited number of children and families in need, due to funding restrictions, political constraints and legal

or practical barriers to access (such as lack of ID cards, data gaps and registration difficulties, among other challenges).

Furthermore, despite evidence of the strong benefits of multi-dimensional programming to tackle the complex needs that different children face, many of the programmes being rolled out in social protection expansion initiatives are relatively insensitive to children's specific needs – and how those needs may vary based on age, gender, disability or other vulnerabilities. To support children effectively, multiple interventions need to be appropriately linked, such as income security; case management to help facilitate access to health, education, child protection and other social services; childcare and parenting support; and skills development and programmes that help parents and young adults to find decent work and (re)build their livelihoods. To a large extent, what we have learned that works for children everywhere also applies to supporting refugee and internally displaced children – but with some important additional considerations given the unique trauma and disruption they have experienced.

All the initiatives underway are being developed in a time of great turmoil, which both underscores the need for strong, universal social protection systems and simultaneously threatens their progress. Every country studied in this paper and worldwide has been negatively affected by

1 Inclusive social protection refers to the set of policies and programmes aimed at preventing and protecting all people against poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion throughout the course of their lives and placing a particular emphasis on vulnerable groups (SPIAC-B, 2019). National social protection systems consist of a range of policies, legislative frameworks, administrative systems and programmes, including both contributory (social insurance) and non-contributory (social assistance and social care) mechanisms, as well as initiatives to enhance human capital, productive assets and access to jobs (labour market programmes) (USP2030, 2019).

the economic and social impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, those dependent on oil saw domestic revenues crash when the onset of the pandemic coincided with a collapse in oil prices. Many others have suffered from high food prices and supply disruptions triggered by the Ukraine war, and some have witnessed extreme circumstances of political, social and economic unrest. Domestic revenues are therefore constrained, and social protection investments are not always prioritised. Moreover, there is a risk of donor fatigue or lack of attention to achieving inclusive social protection that supports children's needs and that can withstand today's crises and future shocks.

This paper contributes to global knowledge on the benefits of inclusive social protection by synthesising existing research from a displacement and child-centred perspective, focusing on eight countries in the Middle East and North Africa and in the Horn of Africa (Egypt, Ethiopia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Sudan and Uganda). These countries are included in the PROSPECTS partnership, which seeks to improve prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities. They are some of the world's largest – and most generous – refugee-hosting countries, as well as often being home to fast-growing populations of internally displaced children. Since they span a range of contexts (from fragile and lower-income countries through to more stable and upper-middle-income economies), they provide valuable insights into both the likely challenges and the possible impacts of different interventions to support displacement-affected populations. While direct evidence on the impacts of inclusive social protection on displaced populations remains limited, emerging findings from across a range of humanitarian and social protection interventions for displaced and host communities are used

to draw out lessons. Through this approach, the paper aims to generate wider policy lessons applicable to both the countries included in the PROSPECTS partnership and the many other countries with notable displaced populations.

Specifically, by drawing on existing evidence, the paper aims to shed light on the following questions: how do inclusive social protection systems support displaced children and their families? What are the benefits of inclusive social protection – for displaced populations, host communities and societies, local economies and state institutions? What are some of the common barriers to, but also opportunities for, realising better child outcomes through social protection that includes displaced children?

Looking forward, the paper considers what kind of policy response is needed to sustain these promising gains and accelerate momentum, and to transition from short-term, humanitarian funding to predictable long-term approaches in order to develop robust social protection systems that work for all children and their families – no matter who they are and where they come from.

The state of inclusive social protection

National social protection systems still only offer relatively limited provision in many low- and middle-income countries, with gaps in adequacy, comprehensiveness and coverage – even for children and families in the host population. For example, only 26% of children globally receive social protection benefits, with coverage particularly low in Africa (13%) and the Arab states (15%). These system gaps are also evident in various forms in the eight countries included in the PROSPECTS partnership that are the focus of this

paper. For instance, in Kenya, Sudan and Jordan, only 3.6%, 8.1% and 8.8% of children, respectively, are covered by social protection systems.

Extending social protection to displaced children and families is therefore an additional challenge in an already difficult context – and one where substantial progress is still needed. Across the eight countries studied, few displaced children and families currently access national social protection systems, undermining the core tenant that ‘a child is a child’ and that all children in a country should be educated, cared for and protected more broadly, without discrimination.

In most countries’ laws and policies, IDPs and generally also refugees are officially entitled to contribute to social insurance schemes if they can access formal employment. However, due to legal and practical restrictions on their access to work, alongside high rates of informality where they reside, the number of refugees and IDPs working in the formal sector remains low – leaving them and their families largely excluded from employment-based protections such as contributory systems of family benefits, parental leave or social health insurance. A few countries are extending social insurance to informal workers and have made refugees eligible for such schemes, as is the case in recently established voluntary social security schemes in Kenya and Uganda. Refugees are also eligible to contribute to national health insurance systems in Egypt, Jordan, Kenya and Sudan. However, many face challenges accessing such schemes in practice due to financial, practical and information barriers, although there are some notable efforts to overcome these and increase coverage for displaced populations. These efforts include subsidising health insurance premiums with domestic financing (for IDPs in Sudan, for

example) or more typically with international funds (for example, UNHCR-supported subsidisation of national health insurance for refugees in Kenya and formerly in Sudan).

In relation to social assistance, laws and policies have often restricted provision to citizens, leaving refugees ineligible for major national social assistance programmes. This is the case, for example, in Ethiopia, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Uganda and for Syrian refugees in Iraq (although in the latter case refugees should be eligible for displacement-specific assistance from the state, but lack access in practice due to fiscal and coordination challenges). In Kenya and Sudan, however, forthcoming national strategies and policies are expected to explicitly cover refugees. In other cases, refugees have been or are starting to be included in practice in certain social assistance schemes, including Ethiopia’s Urban Productive Safety Net Project (UPSNP), a cash transfer pilot for low-income families in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, local social services and the forthcoming National Disability Allowance in Lebanon, and the *Makani* integrated support package in Jordan. This is important progress on the path towards more inclusive social protection systems. But initiatives to date have typically been ad hoc, internationally financed inclusion for specific subsets of refugees, in limited geographical areas or through pilot programming.

In the countries hosting the largest IDP populations (Ethiopia, Iraq and Sudan), there are laws and policies that explicitly promote state assistance for IDPs, yet this has frequently been limited in practice due to political, fiscal or operational barriers (including poor state systems or territorial uncertainty in the areas where IDPs reside). Even as citizens, IDPs face barriers to inclusion. For example, in all three countries, IDPs

have struggled to access major social assistance programmes due to portability challenges or prohibitive residency, identification or other documentation requirements – although in some contexts such as Iraq, more universal schemes and specific inclusion efforts have allowed a relatively high proportion of IDPs to benefit from the Public Distribution System or displacement assistance.

Given the gaps in state coverage, displaced populations have more often been reached by internationally financed humanitarian interventions than by state social protection. These programmes have traditionally been implemented by non-governmental agencies, operating in parallel with state social protection systems and relying on unpredictable short-term funds. Around three-quarters of bilateral assistance for refugee situations goes to humanitarian rather than development assistance, often with a project lifespan of one year or less.

With displaced children and families now generally living among host communities over many years or even decades, and increasingly in urban areas rather than in segregated camps, a short-term, humanitarian model to support displaced populations is not well-suited to meeting needs sustainably in most displacement situations. The volatile, ad hoc approach fails to address the structural barriers that displaced children and families face and leaves them unable to invest in rebuilding their lives in a meaningful manner. At the same time, host communities are often left neglected, failing to receive adequate support through either humanitarian or state systems. This creates an urgent need for national governments and local and international partners to work together to strengthen national social protection systems for all.

Why invest in inclusive social protection?

The existing evidence base on the impacts of inclusive social protection for displaced populations in the eight countries included in the PROSPECTS partnership is limited because of the nascent systems and minimal inclusion described above. However, drawing on the wider evidence that does exist on social protection for displaced and for host populations, complemented by findings from internationally led humanitarian interventions, generates important lessons about the potential benefits to be achieved from inclusive social protection in displacement contexts.

Protecting children and families

There is strong evidence from around the world that the delivery of regular and predictable social protection reduces poverty, smooths consumption and increases access to services. Extending social protection to displaced children and families has also been found to increase their resilience and reduce poverty through ensuring income security and reducing social exclusion and vulnerability, particularly when provided in a sustained, regular and predictable manner. Assistance can also help address the specific risks that displaced children and youth face by facilitating access to food, school and health and nutrition services, improving the wellbeing and mental health of both children themselves and their parents, and reducing the need to resort to detrimental coping strategies such as sexual exploitation, child labour and neglect, family separation, forced marriage and other forms of exploitation and abuse. However, child and gender protection risks are complex, and positive effects of programmes are not found across the board, in part because such programmes are often limited

to low-level, short-term cash transfers, which are insufficient to ensure that at-risk individuals and families get the sustained support and services needed to overcome the protection threats they face. As such, careful programme design is required to address the range of needs and risks that displaced children and adolescents face – considering issues of adequacy, coverage and predictability of benefits, as well as going beyond cash and indeed beyond the social protection sector to incorporate additional programme components or strategic linkages to social workers, child protection teams and other specialised services.

Boosting economies

While the inclusion of displaced populations in social protection systems inevitably entails upfront costs, extending social protection to displaced children and families has the potential to generate notable economic benefits by enhancing incomes and enabling recipients to accumulate productive assets and access credit. It can generate medium- and long-term economic gains by building human capital and promoting women's economic empowerment and supporting them to manage childcare and paid work responsibilities. Non-contributory social protection for displaced populations can also have substantial local economic multiplier effects, injecting cash into the economy, increasing demand for services and enabling suppliers to diversify and expand their produce. Granting refugees the right to work and to participate in contributory social protection systems also has important net returns, since it can help expand the tax base, spread risk across a larger pool of members and enhance schemes' financial sustainability, stimulate labour market growth and enable displaced workers (and their families) to earn and spend more in the economy, with positive multiplier effects.

Promoting social cohesion

Beyond the economic effects, the inclusion of displaced populations in social protection systems may also help to reduce tensions that may exist between displaced and host communities and support social cohesion both within and between communities. Studies have documented positive effects of humanitarian cash transfers received by refugees on relations with host communities, including more positive host community attitudes towards refugees as well as increased trust in the host community among refugee recipients. Positive findings are also reported as a result of host and displaced communities building better relationships and expanding their social networks due to opportunities to interact in programmes targeting both groups. However, these outcomes are not automatic, and there are mixed outcomes across contexts. Moreover, evidence also suggests that while government involvement in delivering services can have positive effects on recipients' relations with the state, this is only if they are felt to be well designed and implemented. The biggest point of tension often relates to whether the range of available programming is perceived to unfairly target one group and leave vulnerable households in the rest of the population excluded – reinforcing the case for universal systems of protection where both vulnerable host and displaced populations have adequate access to support.

Strengthening institutions

In many countries, institutional capacity to deliver social protection remains a significant challenge to extending coverage and delivering regular and predictable benefits to the population – and is further strained by the challenge of a large displaced population. However, evidence also suggests that efforts to include displaced children and families

in social protection systems may generate institutional benefits for the state. Initiatives that improve displaced people's access to social protection have the potential to improve service provision for all, by enhancing the accessibility, sophistication, efficiency and shock-responsiveness of existing systems and programmes. A number of governments have been strengthening their overall social protection systems and filling historic gaps in institutional provision by collaborating with international partners to develop programming that serves both displaced and host communities. In some cases, these programmes were established by, or in partnership with, the state; in other cases, humanitarian interventions have gone on to be institutionalised under state leadership. These financial or operational partnerships can be used to enhance the coverage, adequacy, comprehensiveness and performance of social protection systems. In Jordan, for example, joint government-humanitarian programmes to serve displaced and non-displaced children and families have strengthened institutional knowledge and capacity to develop broader child-sensitive systems.

Challenges and opportunities

Whether the potential benefits above are realised depends on the uptake and implementation of efforts to cover displaced children and families through social protection systems. Numerous factors determine the success of such initiatives.

Firstly, patchy or exclusionary **legal and policy frameworks** hinder access to social protection for displaced children and families. This is particularly likely for refugee children and families because national legislation granting displaced people the right to legal residence

in a country may be limited, and even where national refugee laws are in effect, they may prohibit or restrict the right to access social protection, employment or associated rights (such as freedom of movement or access to documentation). While IDPs typically have broader legal access to social protection, they may still be disadvantaged by policies that limit access to entitlements where a person is not a permanent or long-term resident, and hinder portability between regions. Addressing context-specific barriers and supporting initiatives to strengthen legal and policy frameworks therefore presents a first step towards improving displaced children and families' access to social protection – but only when followed by robust implementation and necessary reforms to programme design.

The availability of **financial resources** inevitably plays a central role in determining the possibilities for including displaced children and families in social protection systems. Limited prioritisation of social protection financing is often a challenge even for the host population, particularly for non-contributory provision. Fiscal challenges have increased in recent years as the proportion of the population in need of assistance has increased with successive crises. However, countries included in the PROSPECTS partnership also offer successful examples of governments securing innovative or additional financing to help improve social protection provision, for displaced and host populations alike. In some cases, such as for IDPs in Sudan, this has included financing through non-traditional domestic sources, such as Zakat financing. In other cases (including most of the instances where refugees are accessing state-led cash transfer and labour market programmes), international financing has helped to develop more inclusive social protection systems, although

the lack of predictable long-term financing, prioritisation and sustainability of international assistance continues to be a challenge.

Operational capacity and coordination also determine the opportunities or challenges associated with extending social protection to displaced children and families in practice. Limited overall coverage and gaps in coordination or capacity (including data) frequently hinder a government's ability to implement inclusive social protection. Conversely, improvements in operational capacity and coordination enhance inclusion of displaced children and families. Such efforts often focus on ensuring better information about displaced families in government databases (including through improved representation in national surveys and registries, better linkages between humanitarian and state databases, and greater focus on birth registration). Operational improvements have also sought to address the bottlenecks hindering timely and accessible registration or delivery, including by simplifying registration requirements, improving access to ID and other documentation, expanding digital options for access and making arrangements for portable benefits (frequently through collaboration between multiple government agencies, and supported by international actors).

The **political environment** and the actors within it often matter more than contextual factors in determining the inclusion of displaced children and families in social protection systems. Political will varies depending on specific stakeholders' interests, motivation and attitudes towards the displaced population in question, as well as their ideological view of social protection (for example, whether they equate such protection with unsustainable handouts that encourage dependence or whether they recognise that

social protection can also be a tool to promote self-reliance, sustainable livelihoods and inclusive social and economic development). Beyond political will, other critical factors relate to the nature and extent of governance and political stability in the country. There may be unique political problems for IDPs, since certain crises (e.g. active conflict) may render state provision inappropriate or infeasible for specific territories or populations. In some crisis circumstances where there is a rapid increase in refugees or IDPs, there may be opportunities for humanitarian agencies to provide assistance in ways that contribute to the future strengthening of the social protection system (in Lebanon, for example, the humanitarian response to the Syrian refugee influx has gradually helped to advance the state's relatively limited social assistance system). Care should also be taken, however, to ensure that humanitarian-social protection linkages are not undertaken in a manner that presents adverse risks for the affected populations (Lowe and Cherrier, 2022). For example, channelling humanitarian assistance via state systems would not be appropriate where the latter are unable to reliably distribute assistance to the population in question, or where displaced people may be unable or unwilling to access state systems.

Looking forward

To achieve the full potential of inclusive social protection in countries affected by displacement, concerted efforts by governments and international partners are needed to strengthen the inclusion of displaced children and families in appropriate and adequate social protection systems. Recognising the significant fiscal and political challenges faced by countries at this time, four key overarching policy recommendations are proposed for strengthening inclusive social protection for families and children in the future.

1. Invest in social protection systems that are inclusive of refugees and IDPs as part of a broader strategy to promote universal access to comprehensive and shock-responsive social protection that responds to children’s needs, recognising the important benefits that such investments can bring.

- Undertake specific initiatives to support access for displaced children and families but link these to broader efforts to expand and strengthen social protection for all – and to ensure that the system is resilient to shocks.
- Recognise that national social protection systems take time to develop, requiring greater involvement of international and local partners in the interim.

2. Support innovative and long-term financing strategies.

- Ensure social protection expansion strategies are reinforced with adequate prioritisation and sufficient and sustained financing.
 - This requires advocating for domestic budget allocation, drawing on the range of fiscal space generation options that may be available in a given country context (from increasing tax and social security revenues and reallocating public expenditure, to eliminating illicit financial flows, adapting macroeconomic policy, using foreign exchange reserves or borrowing or restructuring existing debt).
 - International funding also has a key role to play in supporting such strategies, based on existing international commitments to share the global responsibility for addressing displacement challenges.

- Support the transition from short-term, humanitarian-financed programmes to longer-term development assistance and direct support to national budgets, considering the use of innovative financing approaches, developing transitional financing strategies, and building the evidence base on the benefits of investing in inclusive social protection across social and economic outcomes.

3. Strengthen the enabling environment for inclusive social protection – and build support for its implementation.

- Identify the political entry points to establish legal and regulatory rights to social protection. Understanding the political context and how to frame the narrative to support inclusion is vital.
- Work collaboratively to deliver legal and policy commitments on paper and in practice. Engage with a wide range of international, national and local partners to support not only the technical aspects of policy change but also the high-level dialogue required to stimulate and develop political and financial commitments, as well as supporting public demand for inclusive social protection.
- Invest in pilots with the intention of scaling up – undertake pilots with a strategy for scaling up investments and for transitioning to sustainably resourced systems, through shared priorities with key stakeholders designing and financing the systems.
- Address evidence gaps. Demonstrating the positive impacts of inclusive social protection has been an important avenue across several countries, but significant data gaps remain at global and country levels which need to be filled.

4. Ensure that the design and implementation of inclusive social protection meets the needs of displaced children and families.

- Recognise and address the specific needs of children through strengthened social protection design. Develop adequate and integrated responses to tackle the multiple dimensions of poverty – for both host and displaced households. Strengthen the linkages across social protection interventions, including with social care, social workers, child protection and other specialised services to address the heightened risks that displaced children face.
- Invest in strengthening the operational delivery of social protection, both in terms of strengthening data to improve the underlying information systems for social protection delivery and supporting adaptations and implementation capacity to reduce the barriers faced by different displaced populations in practice. Recognise that in some cases, issues of trust, accountability and active protection threats may continue to hinder displaced children and families’ access to state systems, requiring continued involvement of non-governmental agencies in delivery.

1 Introduction

The number of forcibly displaced people – and the number of children and young people uprooted by crises – has reached unprecedented levels. As of 2021, total displacement had doubled in just one decade, and mid-year estimates for 2022 suggest over 100 million people are now displaced (UNHCR, 2022a). Children and young people are disproportionately affected. While they represent 30% of the world's population, 41% of all forcibly displaced people are under the age of 18 (ibid.). A higher number of children and young people are displaced by conflict and violence today than in any year since World War II – 37 million at the end of 2021, including 14 million refugees or asylum seekers and 23 million internally displaced in their own countries (IDPs) (UNICEF, 2022b).

Not only are children disproportionately represented among the displaced population, but they are also among the most vulnerable. Displaced children face severe risks to their survival, food security, health and education, and are more likely to experience violence, exploitation or abuse (Marcus et al., 2020). Many are currently falling between the gaps. For example, only around two out of every three refugee children are currently enrolled in primary school, while fewer than 40% of refugee adolescents are in secondary school (UNHCR, 2022d). Boys and girls experience both different levels and different types of risks. For example, girls face higher risks of certain forms of violence and are more likely to be married early, while boys may experience higher risks of child labour, working in hazardous or exploitative situations (UN, 2019).

These risks are even more concerning given that there is often no end in sight to displacement for uprooted children and families. Seventy-four percent of refugees now live in protracted situations, meaning displacement has been occurring for over five years, which for children equates to more than a quarter of their childhood. Many people displaced within their own country or across borders find themselves unable to return home for more than a decade (Devictor and Do, 2016; UNHCR, 2022a). Without proper attention to their needs, this situation of limbo leaves children and youth at high risk of being trapped in a cycle of poverty and deprivation from childhood into adulthood, with limited opportunity to break the transmission of poverty for future generations.

Moreover, protracted displacement often occurs in areas with high – and frequently growing – levels of poverty and vulnerability, creating an urgent need for a sustainable response to widespread needs among both the host and displaced populations. Eighty-three percent of refugees and almost all IDPs live in low- or middle-income countries (Huang and Graham, 2019; UNHCR, 2022a). They tend to reside in regions where deprivation levels are already high (and frequently increasing, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, economic shocks and climate-related disasters). While in some cases the affected regions are neglected rural areas, in many other cases they are informal settlements in cities and towns (where more than half of displaced people now reside). These settlements are characterised by poor service provision, limited

formal employment opportunities and gaps in social protection provision for displaced and host populations alike.

Supporting the growth of inclusive national social protection systems can therefore play a crucial role in developing a sustainable approach to address the pressing needs of both displaced and host children and families. Inclusive social protection refers to the set of policies and programmes aimed at preventing and protecting all people against poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion throughout the course of their lives and placing a particular emphasis on vulnerable groups (SPIAC-B, 2019).² National social protection systems consist of a range of policies, legislative frameworks, administrative systems and programmes, including both contributory (social insurance) and non-contributory (social assistance and social care) mechanisms, as well as initiatives to enhance human capital, productive assets and access to jobs (labour market programmes) (USP2030, 2019).

Around the world, host governments and the international community have committed to developing inclusive social protection systems that cover displaced children and their families. Widely ratified international commitments – such as the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child – provide the legal basis for the right to social protection without discrimination based on place of origin or nationality. Displaced people’s

rights to social protection are further outlined in long-standing displacement-specific conventions (such as the 1951 Refugee Convention). Recent additional instruments, such as the 2012 Social Protection Floors Recommendation 202, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the 2018 Global Compact for Refugees, have reinforced commitments to universalise access to social protection, with displaced children and families identified as a vulnerable group requiring particular inclusion efforts (UN, 2018).

The aim of this paper is to explore the existing and potential role of inclusive social protection in supporting displaced children and their families – and in bringing about wider benefits for host communities and the host country.

The paper is based on experiences and emerging lessons from eight countries: Egypt, Ethiopia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Sudan and Uganda. These countries are part of the PROSPECTS partnership for improving prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities, and host some of the largest displaced populations in the world (see Table 1).³ The paper draws on a review of literature, noting however that the current evidence base on the impacts of national social protection systems on displaced populations is limited due to nascent systems or minimal inclusion to date. As such, we also draw on the wider literature to learn from the effects of internationally led interventions supporting the displaced. While the paper focuses on countries included in the PROSPECTS partnership, it also generates wider policy lessons applicable to other countries facing notable displacement challenges.

² This definition was developed by SPIAC-B, an interagency coordination mechanism composed of representatives of international organisations and bilateral institutions, as part of Inter-Agency Social Protection Assessments (ISPA) tools development (UNICEF, 2019a).

³ For example, Uganda hosts the most refugees in Africa, while Lebanon hosts the most refugees per capita globally (UNHCR, 2022a)

The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 highlights key risks and vulnerabilities faced by displaced families and their children. Section 3 provides an overview of current access to social protection for displaced populations in the eight countries. Section 4 looks at why governments should invest in inclusive social protection

across four potential outcome areas associated with extending social protection to displaced children and families, while Section 5 considers the major opportunities and challenges. Section 6 summarises key learning and guidance for promoting the effective inclusion of displaced children and families in social protection systems.

Table 1 Refugees and IDPs in PROSPECTS countries (2020)

2020 data	Total registered refugees	Share < 18 years	Main refugee nationalities	Total registered IDPs	Share < 18 years
Egypt	272,856	40%	Syria, Palestine, Sudan	11,600	39%
Ethiopia	800,464	60%	South Sudan, Somalia	2,693,000	47%
Iraq ⁴	270,392	42%	Syria	1,224,000	44%
Jordan	702,506	48%	Syria (Palestine) ⁵	-	0%
Kenya	452,941	55%	Somalia (DRC for asylum seekers)	394,000	45%
Lebanon	870,418	56%	Syria (Palestine) ⁶	7,000	30%
Sudan	1,040,308	49%	South Sudan, Eritrea	2,730,000	46%
Uganda	1,421,133	59%	South Sudan, DRC	34,000	53%
Total	5,831,018	54%		7,093,600	46%

Source: UNICEF (2022c), using 2020 data.

4 This study covers the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), a semi-autonomous region that hosts the vast majority of displaced people in Iraq. UNHCR statistics in this table cover all of Iraq.

5 Jordan also hosts over 2 million Palestinians who fall outside the scope and protections of the 1951 Refugee Convention. They are not counted under UNHCR's mandate but do come under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The majority have Jordanian nationality, with the exception of 158,000 'ex-Gazan' refugees – Palestinians who fled from Gaza to Jordan in the aftermath of the June 1967 hostilities – as well as around 17,000 Palestine refugees from Syria (UNRWA, 2018)

6 Lebanon also hosts nearly 500,000 refugees from Palestine, under the UNRWA mandate.

2 Risks facing displaced families and children

While deprivation levels are often high for all in the areas affected by displacement, displaced people experience heightened economic and social risks and vulnerabilities. Displaced populations are more likely to be living in poverty. Surveys measuring consumption in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda and efforts to model poverty in Jordan, for example, show that, on average, the poverty rate for refugees is 25 to 40 percentage points higher than that of the national population (UNHCR, 2021a). Displaced populations are also likely to experience poor working conditions, especially for informal or undocumented workers, receiving low wages for often hazardous work. Many are unable to legally access jobs in the formal labour market where host countries restrict their right to work. Displaced populations may also experience specific physical and mental health challenges due to the psychosocial impacts and trauma of forced displacement, as well limited access to services and food and income insecurity. Women and girls are also particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence and abuse, early marriage and teenage pregnancy. In addition, displaced populations may face stigma, discrimination and exclusion in society, especially when faced with language and cultural barriers and heightened security concerns and restrictions on freedom of movement (Andrade et al., 2021).

These risks and vulnerabilities vary by many factors, including country of origin, arrival date,

locality of residence (camp, host community, urban), education level and gender, among others. In Egypt, for example, language barriers facing non-Arabic-speaking refugees exacerbates their situation, making them a particular vulnerable group within the displaced population (UNHCR, 2020a).⁷ Those living in camps generally have different experiences than those in communities, with those in remote areas having more limited access to services and those in urban areas sometimes experiencing heightened security concerns. Demographic factors such as household headship, gender and household size also influence risks and vulnerability. Among refugees in Kakuma Camp in Kenya in 2019, for example, female-headed households were more likely to be poor (72%) than those led by males (61%), whereas there was little difference in Uganda (UNHCR, 2021a). In Ethiopia, the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) and incidence of multidimensional poverty in the refugee population was found to be much higher for those living in female-headed households compared to those living in male-headed households, whereas no significant differences were found in Sudan (Admasu et al., 2021).

Compared to the host population, displaced populations often have more limited support to navigate the wide-ranging risks that they face. Displaced people's ability to cope with urgent needs is often more limited due to their reduced access to economic opportunities,

⁷ The UNHCR study found that non-Arabic speaking groups had lower levels of access to residence permits, public education, food security and nutrition, and private housing, as well as experiencing higher levels of discrimination and violence. Female refugees are especially vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence, and are less likely to have employment and received much lower wages than men (UNHCR, 2020a).

family networks and services, including social protection, health, education and specialised services (Andrade et al., 2021). The traumatic experience of forced displacement and severe deprivation is a distinguishing factor from the host population. In the absence of proper protection, displaced households are often forced to rely on negative coping strategies, such as relying on children to work, marrying daughters early or selling assets (World Bank, 2017; Hagen-Zanker et al., 2022).

This puts displaced children and youth at particular risk – and the number of children with urgent protection-related needs is growing (UNHCR, 2022a). Globally, only two-thirds of refugee children are enrolled in primary school and fewer than 40% in secondary school (UNHCR, 2022d). In Jordan in 2019-20, enrolment for refugees at the primary level was 59%, compared to 82% for hosts, and even worse at secondary school, where the enrolment rate for refugees was 25% compared to 65% for host learners (UNHCR, 2021c). These challenges dramatically limit displaced children and youth's future life opportunities and subjects them to immediate risks, including lack of appropriate alternative care, physical and verbal violence and abuse, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and child labour (UNHCR, 2020b). Refugee youth in Lebanon, for example, continue to face limited access to education, and whilst boys are more likely to be engaged in child labour, Syrian girls are highly vulnerable to child marriage and subsequently intimate partner violence (UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP, 2021; GAGE, 2021).

The impact of crises such as Covid-19 has amplified the risks and vulnerabilities experienced by displaced children and youths. Studies have shown that in addition to heightening poverty, reducing access to services

and negatively impacting families' ability to meet their basic needs in host and displaced communities alike, Covid-19 has also increased displaced children and young people's exposure to specific risks (Tanner et al., 2021; UNHCR, 2021a). These include increases in the burden of care work (falling disproportionately on girls), child labour (as families struggle to meet their basic household needs), school drop-out rates (particularly for girls) and learning gaps as a result of limited access to online learning during school closures (UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP, 2020); riskier modes of migration and border crossings; exposure to trafficking; and increased exposure to gender-based violence (Litzkow, 2021; UNICEF, 2021a). For example, Covid-19 has exacerbated multidimensional poverty and food insecurity, household violence and social isolation (especially for girls) amongst the young refugee population in Lebanon (GAGE, 2021). Among refugees in Uganda, child marriage grew by 18% and teenage pregnancies by 21% during the pandemic (Guha, 2020).

This means that, now more than ever, there is an urgent need to develop and strengthen inclusive social protection systems that can help to respond to the needs of displaced children and families. Although not sufficient to meet all needs on its own, social protection is a key mechanism for supporting vulnerable children and their families, and for breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty that may otherwise occur (discussed further in Section 4). Whether directly aimed at improving children's outcomes or through more general provision to the household, social assistance programmes (such as cash or in-kind transfers, subsidies and school feeding programmes), for instance, are proven policy tools across a range of outcomes. This includes smoothing household expenditure and support to livelihoods, which in

turn helps to improve the food security, nutrition, and physical and mental health of children. Social assistance also facilitates access to services such as childcare, health and education for vulnerable children, as well as reducing the likelihood of the family having to resort to adverse coping strategies (such as child labour, skipping meals or early marriage). Social health insurance can also support access to vital health services, while other employment-based contributory schemes provide financial stability for the families of working parents (although typically only those in formal employment) when household incomes or access to livelihoods are disrupted. Labour market programmes can promote access to decent work, helping young men and women whose opportunities may otherwise be limited to find good jobs, and increasing employment opportunities for those whose career pathways have been disrupted (a category in which many displaced parents may find themselves). Meanwhile, social care services provide specialist assistance to children and families with specific needs, ensuring they have access to the support needed to live well and to avoid risks of deprivation, abuse or neglect. Social protection alone cannot address all needs, but when well-designed, it can connect families with additional support and complementary services.

However, challenges remain both in relation to the extent of coverage of displaced populations and the adequacy of programmes in meeting displaced people's needs. A recent global review highlighted that forcibly displaced populations are typically excluded from state social protection, instead being mainly served by short-term internationally financed humanitarian programmes – due primarily to eligibility restrictions but also to barriers to accessing programmes that they may be eligible for (such as documentation requirements, location, access to technology, as well as general limitations in the coverage, financing and adequacy of many countries' systems) (Gray Meral and Both, 2021; Lowe et al., 2022b). Whether in law or in practice, programmes that exclude refugees or IDPs, or that discriminate between different nationalities, undermine the core tenant that 'a child is a child' and that all children in a country should be educated, cared for and protected more broadly, without discrimination. Given these challenges, as well as the heightened and diverse needs of forcibly displaced populations, social protection programmes will need to both expand coverage and adapt to adequately respond to specific risks and vulnerabilities created by displacement, as part of a broader sustainable package of support for those affected by displacement.

3 Displaced access to social protection in eight countries

As illustrated in Table 2, national social protection systems in the eight countries studied are at varying degrees of maturity, but all have gaps in the adequacy, coverage and comprehensiveness of their system, even for children and families in the host population – as is the case in the majority of low- and middle-income countries worldwide (ILO, 2021e). In some cases, national social protection policies or programmes are themselves relatively nascent

(e.g. Uganda). But even where policy frameworks are longer-standing and flagship schemes have been operating for many years, they often cover only a fraction of the population in need (e.g. Lebanon), provide very limited levels or types of support (e.g. Ethiopia and Sudan), operate in a somewhat fragmented manner (e.g. Jordan) or revolve around generalised subsidies that have historically done little to help the most vulnerable children and families (e.g. Iraq).

Table 2 Social protection coverage of national population in the eight PROSPECTS countries

	Proportion of population covered by at least one social protection benefit (in national population) (%)	Vulnerable persons ⁸ covered by social assistance (in national population) (%)	Children protected by social protection systems (%)
Egypt	34.7	19.9	14.0
Ethiopia	7.4	3.2	4.5
Iraq	40.5	26.9	Data not available
Jordan	27.8	9.7	8.8
Kenya	10.1	2.5	3.6
Lebanon	13.9	1.7	32.7
Sudan	9.3	7.5	8.1
Uganda	2.8	1.2	Data not available

Source: ILO (2022), based on data for 2020 or latest available year.

It is therefore already a demanding task for governments to work towards the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target of implementing nationally appropriate social

protection systems for all with substantial coverage of the poor and vulnerable. And with the damage wrought by Covid-19, the global food and fuel crises, as well as numerous country-specific

8 'Vulnerable persons' in this context refers to all children plus adults who are not covered by contributory benefits and persons above retirement age not receiving contributory benefits (ILO, n.d.).

crises and constraints, the need to step up provision for the national population has become both more urgent and more challenging.

Effectively serving displaced populations through these systems presents an additional challenge in an already strained operating context. Even so, recent years have seen widespread announcements of policies and initiatives to improve inclusion of IDPs and refugees in the national systems studied, as discussed throughout this section. This progress is in part a result of the growing international commitments to strengthen state provision through humanitarian and displacement responses, which has enabled many governments hosting large displaced populations to draw on international support and funds to strengthen provision for host communities at the same time as including displaced populations.

But so far, many of the inclusion reforms have been at the policy level, in initial rollout, or relating to specific schemes or pilots. In the run-up to the Global Refugee Forum 2023, and in the years remaining of the current SDG Agenda, it will be key to build on this momentum, to enable new policies and early programme reforms to be converted into comprehensive inclusion on a sustained basis.

Below we discuss the legal and effective access to social protection systems for displaced children and families in each of the eight countries studied (also summarised in Table 3 in the Appendix). Since access to social protection is typically dependent on access to legal residence, freedom of movement and, in the case of social insurance and labour market programmes, formal employment, we also provide a summary analysis of the legal frameworks governing these rights in Table 4 in the Appendix.

3.1 Egypt

Refugees are not officially excluded from the main social assistance schemes in Egypt for vulnerable families and children (*Takaful* and *Karama*), but registration requires national ID, prohibiting access (Andrade et al., 2021). Refugees are eligible for (social protection-affiliated) Zakat assistance but it is not known how many are accessing this (ibid). Although refugees with regular employment contracts legally qualify for social insurance, high informality rates and restrictions on access to work mean that few can access either formal employment or associated protections in practice (ibid). Refugees can access health services but whilst they are legally entitled to national health insurance, there are significant challenges with enrolment due to issues such as lack of documentation, registration in the system, cost and quality of services (proving to be a disincentive) (KII; UNHCR, 2022b).

Egypt has a long history of supporting the inclusion of refugee children from certain nationalities in its national education system. Public education is currently available to Sudanese, South Sudanese, Yemeni and Syrian refugee children (but not to children of other nationalities, such as Eritrean or Somali). Refugee community schools (non-governmental/private run) cater to refugee children of all nationalities to facilitate their continued accredited learning and eventual transition into Egypt's public schools, but these can often be relatively costly compared to public education (UNICEF, 2022a).

3.2 Ethiopia

Under the existing social protection policy, social assistance in Ethiopia is aimed at citizens, with refugees excluded (KII). However, the National Comprehensive Refugee Response Strategy

includes broadly defined social protection as a key pillar, and internationally financed projects are underway to include refugees in the urban components of the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) and urban refugees in the Community-Based Health Insurance system (PROSPECTS, 2020; Namara, 2022; KIIs). The 2019 Refugee Proclamation outlines the rights to protection from neglect, abuse, exploitation and trafficking for refugee children; protection from gender-based violence for refugee women; and assistance and protection for refugees with specific needs (Government of Ethiopia, 2019). Refugee workers with regular status are generally covered by social insurance and labour laws (ILO, 2020a), but this is contingent on access to employment, which is limited in various ways.⁹

There is no specific reference to IDPs in the existing national social protection policy, meaning they should be covered on the same terms as other citizens. However, the eligibility criteria of some programmes, such as the PSNP, requires a specific length of residency, which effectively excludes many IDPs (UNICEF, personal communication). The objectives of assisting IDPs and improving their access to social protection and jobs are listed in the 2019 Strategic Plan to Address Internal Displacement and the Durable Solutions Initiative (Meskele Ashine, 2021; DSI, 2020), and efforts are underway at the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs to develop a manual and operating procedures for social protection support to IDPs (UNICEF, personal communication).

3.3 Iraq

Displaced families' rights to social protection in Iraq are strongly shaped by nationality and the corresponding legal regime that governs them.

In relation to the large-scale Public Distribution System (PDS) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA)'s Social Safety Net (SSN) and cash assistance for carers of people with disabilities, Palestinians have access on the same terms as citizens, under the Political Refugees Law 1971, Resolution No. 202 of 2001 and subsequent ad hoc announcements. While Article 1 of the Federal Social Protection Network Law 2014 extends social assistance to vulnerable permanent residents of any nationality, Article 28 restricts equal treatment to Palestinian families resident in Iraq since 1948 and foreigners married to Iraqi citizens. Furthermore, the 2014 Law has not yet been adopted in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), where 98% of Syrians reside, and refugees are not entitled by law to either the PDS or MOLSA assistance in that region. In practice, a small minority of Syrians in the KRI are accessing the PDS, and the Kurdistan Regional Government, World Bank, UNICEF and UNHCR are developing a pilot to re-initiate the KRI's dormant SSN for vulnerable families – with a child grant top-up for households with children under eight years of age, linked to Early Childhood Development (ECD) services – which will include refugees using funding from international partners (Lowe and Salomon, forthcoming; KII).

While IDPs are entitled to social assistance as citizens, lack of portability has meant they have

⁹ Under the 2019 Proclamation, refugees can engage in employment but their working rights are not the same as nationals, except in projects designed jointly by the government and international community. Formal employment is low for all – less than 2% of the host population is covered by social insurance (World Bank ASPIRE 2018 data).

often struggled to access the PDS, although efforts are underway to address this including through digitalisation initiatives (Phadera et al., 2020; World Bank et al., 2021; WFP, 2021). IDPs benefit from MOLSA's SSN and cash assistance for carers of people with disabilities in federal Iraq, and also benefited from the horizontal and vertical expansions of the SSN during the Covid-19 pandemic (Sato et al., 2021). In the KRI, the SSN has been suspended since 2014, but IDPs will be included in the aforementioned pilot for vulnerable families that the government is undertaking with World Bank, UNICEF and UNHCR support. New enrolment for the KRI's small cash transfer for carers of people with disabilities has not occurred in recent years, prohibiting recently arrived IDPs from registering (Lowe and Salomon, forthcoming). Under the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MOMD) Law of 2009, both IDPs and refugees are also legally entitled to specialised assistance from the MOMD, making Iraq one of the few countries with tailored, state-funded assistance programmes for displaced families (IPC-IG and UNICEF, unpublished). However, access is patchy in practice for IDPs¹⁰ and almost entirely hindered for refugees due to fiscal, capacity and coordination challenges, including between the federal government and the Kurdistan regional government in the KRI, where many IDPs and most refugees reside (Lowe and Salomon, forthcoming).

Social insurance has historically been very limited for all workers outside of the public sector,¹¹ but access should be expanded (including for refugees and IDPs) in a forthcoming social insurance bill

that is awaiting parliamentary approval (ibid.). In the KRI, the government is working to increase social security registration for citizens and refugees. Government officials are also working with international partners (especially ILO and UNHCR) in Northern Iraq and the KRI to develop Employment-Intensive Investment Programmes, Employability Service Centres, entrepreneurship support and training for refugees, IDPs and non-displaced citizens (ILO, 2019).

3.4 Jordan

The national social protection system in Jordan is structured around three pillars: opportunity (decent work and social security), empowerment (social services) and dignity (social assistance), based on national regulations. Refugees can access assistance through the Zakat Fund (affiliated to the Ministry of Awqaf and Social Affairs) but not through the main social assistance pillar (the National Aid Fund), although 'ex-Gazan refugees' (those who fled from Gaza to Jordan in the aftermath of the June 1967 hostilities) were included in various state-led Covid-19 assistance programmes (CaLP, 2021; Sato et al., 2021).

In practice, humanitarian assistance runs as a shadow alignment of the national social protection system, with approximately 170,000 refugee households supported by UNICEF, UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP) on a monthly basis through cash assistance and/or cash for work. One of the child-sensitive programmes that has been rigorously evaluated is UNICEF's *Hajati* programme, a monthly cash transfer labelled towards education

10 For example, non-PDS in-kind assistance from the state reached 20% of (in- and out-of-camp) IDPs surveyed in the World Bank and World Food Programme's December 2020 High Frequency Phone Survey, and 11% of (out-of-camp only) IDPs surveyed in the 2017-18 Rapid Welfare Monitoring Survey (Lowe and Salomon, forthcoming).

11 In the 2017-18 Rapid Welfare Monitoring Survey, 25% of out-of-camp IDPs, 27% of the host population and 0% of Syrian refugees were accessing a pension (Lowe and Salomon, forthcoming).

objectives for children who are out of school or at risk of dropping out (UNICEF, 2018).¹² Families received a notification of UNICEF's desire to assist them in keeping their children in school, and those at risk of school drop-out (based on attendance monitoring) were supported through a 'cash plus' component referring them to additional support services (ibid). This included referrals to another initiative known as *Makani*, which has assisted more than 100,000 children and youth – both refugee and Jordanian (in equal numbers) – on a yearly basis since 2015. Originally founded by UNICEF but now grounded in a strategic partnership among local stakeholders and the government, *Makani* is a nationwide, multi-sectoral initiative providing integrated services to children and young people regardless of nationality or status. This includes ECD interventions, child protection and learning support services, adolescent and youth engagement and skills building (including digital skills), which are essential to tackle the complex needs of vulnerable children and young people and to empower them to develop to their full potential.¹³

Refugees have access to public health insurance on the same preferential terms as uninsured Jordanians. Where mandatory for citizens, social security is also mandatory for refugees,¹⁴ but low compliance means only 4% of Syrian employees are covered (ILO, 2021a). Although the Jordan Compact aimed to integrate Syrians into the formal labour market (and thereby ensure

their social security access), only 82,000 work permits were issued in 2021 (KII) and equivalent arrangements have not been established for refugees of other nationalities (Almasri, 2021). The government is working with partners to improve access to permits and to decent work via various labour market programmes for both citizens and refugees (GCFF, n.d., ILO, 2021b). The pandemic saw the government temporarily extend the eligibility criteria for unemployment benefits during the Covid-19 crisis, to the benefit of both national and non-national insured workers. However, most social insurance and labour market interventions during the pandemic were restricted to national workers and to ex-Gazan refugees and children of Jordanian mothers only, limiting access for refugees more broadly (Sato et al., 2021).

3.5 Kenya

Refugees have not historically had the right to social assistance in Kenya (UNHCR, 2021b). However, several initiatives are now underway to enhance the inclusion of refugees. For example, the inclusion of refugees has been put forward in the new Social Assistance Bill, and discussions are underway between development partners and the government for inclusion of refugees in future, subject to resourcing decisions (UNHCR, 2022c, KII). Moreover, there are plans to include refugees in the national social registry used to target social protection. UNHCR is also using the social pension to channel transfers. Refugees are eligible

12 At its peak, *Hajati* supported 55,000 children per school year (the vast majority Syrian but also Jordanian and other nationalities), but by 2022, funding gaps reduced the programme to around 18,000 children, indicating the challenge of sustainability for programmes dependent on short-term humanitarian funding (UNICEF, 2022e).

13 The traditional *Makani* programme model therefore focuses on providing an integrated service package, rather than direct cash or similar transfers. We consider this within the broad scope of social protection since this includes social care services and skills-enhancing labour market programmes.

14 Where voluntary for citizens (i.e. for own-account workers, contributing family workers) it is not open to refugees (ILO, 2021a).

to contribute to and benefit from the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), and there is also work underway by ILO to investigate how to make *Haba Haba* (a recently-established NSSF initiative for informal workers) more accessible to refugees (Personal communication; Re:Build, 2022).

To date, refugees have also accessed some assistance from the Department of Children's Services (in partnership with UNHCR and UNICEF), including case management, psychosocial support and safe shelter for children at risk of abuse and exploitation, and services for gender-based violence (although service availability is very limited) (UNHCR, 2021b). Refugees' access to social insurance and labour market programmes has been hampered by encampment policies and restricted mobility (as well as limited coverage of those schemes) (UNHCR, 2022c). However, refugees do have access to social health insurance implemented by the National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF) at the same subsidised rate as informal sector workers, and over 22,000 refugee households are covered (in urban areas and particular vulnerable households in camps) thanks to UNHCR/FCDO-subsidised access (UNHCR, 2021b, 2022c; Maara, 2022). They will also therefore benefit from the planned maternity income benefit for women enrolled in the NHIF when it is implemented (KII; NHIF, Maara, 2022).

3.6 Lebanon

Syrians' residence in Lebanon is not covered by national refugee legislation, and the vast majority (80%) lack legal residence on another basis so also lack legal rights to social protection (Huelzer

and Divine, 2020; UNHCR et al. 2022). Social insurance coverage for displaced populations is largely unattainable,¹⁵ in part because Syrians' legal work opportunities are restricted to sectors where informality rates are high, such as agriculture, construction and sanitation (Bastagli et al., 2019). ILO-supported labour market programmes are working to promote better access to employment and decent work for displaced and host populations, through skills development, job creation schemes and initiatives to strengthen social protection provisions (ILO, 2021b).

While refugees may be able to access childcare and local social services, to date national social assistance schemes have been restricted to citizens (Bastagli et al., 2019; KII). Instead, Syrian children have principally been assisted through programmes run by international agencies in partnership with the government (with international funding). These have typically been on a larger scale than national social protection programmes for Lebanese, which remain limited in coverage. The No Lost Generation *Min Ila* programme provided a cash transfer and case management services to help Syrian children to access school, but insufficient funding prevented scale-up in 2018-19 (UNICEF, 2019b). More recently, the *Haddi* child grant was initiated by UNICEF in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs and civil society partners, providing a child grant and complementary services including behaviour change communication and household visits for both vulnerable displaced (Syrian and Palestinian) and vulnerable Lebanese families (with roughly a 65/35 ratio, funded by international partners) (UNICEF, 2022d). In March 2022, the

15 Eligibility depends on work opportunities and residency documentation. In 2010, Palestine refugees residing in Lebanon were granted the right to benefit from the end-of-service provisions under NSSF, but they are still not covered by illness, maternity or family indemnities.

grant was reaching 130,000 children (ibid.). The forthcoming National Disability Allowance also represents a shift, in that it is a national programme fully led by government but which, according to its programme documentation, is designed to include both Lebanese and non-Lebanese refugee nationalities.

3.7 Sudan

Refugees in Sudan are legally entitled to public assistance under the 2014 Asylum Act and are eligible for support from the government-affiliated National Zakat Fund (Government of Sudan, 2014). In practice, their access to routine social assistance has been limited, although some were reportedly included in the *Shamel* livelihoods projects in certain states (ILO, 2022) and urban refugees in Khartoum were included in a one-off Covid Emergency Relief programme (Sato et al., 2021; UNICEF, 2021b). Under the 2016 health insurance law, refugees theoretically have (non-subsidised) access to the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF), but in practice they have lacked access due to the need for a national ID card, and political guidance to facilitate their enrolment is still missing (although a small subset benefited from subsidised NHIF access during a short-term UNHCR-funded pilot in Khartoum in 2016-17) (KII; ILO, 2022). As noted in Table 2 (Appendix A), refugees struggle to access formal employment so their access to pensions and social security is minimal in practice, although the entitlements exist in legislation for foreign employees (Zetter and Ruaudel, 2016; Holloway et al., forthcoming). Internationally funded labour market programmes for refugees, as well as IDPs and host community members, are being

rolled out,¹⁶ led by international partners (in coordination with government agencies where appropriate). Furthermore, the National Vision for Host Communities and Refugees (2021-2026) lists social protection and livelihoods as a priority sector going forward.

The draft National Social Protection Strategy (officially endorsed by the Minister of Social Development just before the October 2021 coup, but still pending government approval) includes both refugees and IDPs as vulnerable groups through a rights-based approach (UNHCR, 2022c; Holloway et al., forthcoming). The National Policy for Internally Displaced Persons already obliges the government to ensure IDPs' access to their rights as citizens, including to social protection (Government of Sudan, 2009). In practice, IDPs have had challenges accessing these rights, in particular due to the lack of ID cards required for registration and living in areas that are poorly served by the schemes (KII; ILO, 2022). However, specific efforts were made under the transition government to improve IDPs' access to the *Shamel* livelihoods scheme and the new Sudan Family Support Programme (SFSP). IDPs are relatively well covered by the NHIF, with subsidised access by law (funded by the National Zakat Fund). IDPs were also included in the one-off Covid Emergency Relief programme mentioned above (UNICEF, 2021b).

3.8 Uganda

Uganda's progressive model for refugee protection and management offers better prospects for refugee children in Uganda than in many similar contexts globally, with these

16 For example, PROSPECTS projects in East Darfur and West Kordofan (PROSPECTS, 2021); and the GIZ-funded 'Employment Promotion Darfur for Refugees, IDPs and Host Communities' in South, North and West Darfur (ILO, 2022).

children enjoying the same access as citizens to public health, universal primary and secondary education, child protection, and birth registration and other social services. There has, however, been limited inclusion of refugees in social assistance to date (UNHCR, 2022c). The National Social Protection Policy was designed for Ugandan citizens, and refugees are not targeted by the main national cash transfer scheme (the Senior Citizens' Grant) (Government of Uganda, 2016; 2020). However, Uganda's revised Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) Road Map for refugees and host communities (Government of Uganda, 2018) set an objective to formally include refugees in a revised National Social Protection Policy as well as the National Social Protection Strategy (currently in the finalisation stage). In the meantime, refugees have been accessing various donor-financed assistance schemes that have been run by, or in partnership with, the government, including the National Ugandan Social Action Fund (NUSAF) programme and the Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (DRDIP) (both deliver public works and livelihood support for both refugees and host communities, among other components), the Child-Sensitive Social Protection (CSSP) programme in the West Nile sub-region (providing social protection, health and nutrition support for Ugandan and refugee pregnant and lactating women and children under

two years old), and the Girls Empowering Girls (GEG) programme (an urban social protection programme for adolescent girls).¹⁷

Under the Refugees Act 2006 refugees are not guaranteed the benefits of social insurance (Zetter and Ruaudel, 2016). Refugees can participate in the National Social Security Fund, including under the newly established voluntary scheme, but at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic only 6% of refugees surveyed had a household member participating in the fund (ILO, 2021c). The 2021 National Health Insurance Scheme Bill has not yet been signed into law, but does include refugees (although it is unclear at this stage whether they will have subsidised access as a vulnerable group). Under PROSPECTS, the ILO is working with the government on various livelihoods and labour market programmes for both refugees and host communities.¹⁸ During the pandemic, the ILO, the Ministry of Labour and World Bank also piloted a new Urban Cash for Work programme supporting informal workers and vulnerable households, for both Ugandans and refugees (ILO, 2020b).

17 NUSAF and DRDIP sit under the Office of the Prime Minister and follow a similar model; the former started in 2003 and completed its third phase in 2021, while the latter started in 2017 and provides livelihood support and public works (and direct cash transfers to labour-constrained households) for both refugees and host communities in 15 districts with World Bank funding. The five-year CSSP programme in the West Nile sub-region started in 2019 and provides social protection, health and nutrition support for Ugandan and refugee pregnant and lactating women and children under two years old (funded by the Government of Sweden, implemented by WFP and UNICEF in collaboration with the Ugandan government). Also launched in 2019, the four-year GEG programme is the first urban social protection programme for adolescent girls, launched by the Kampala Capital City Authority in partnership with UNICEF and covering both Ugandans and urban refugees (Mugume et al., 2021; Salomon et al., forthcoming).

18 This includes apprenticeships, recognition of qualifications, access to finance, entrepreneurship and business development and market strengthening in refugee-hosting areas (ILO/PROSPECTS, 2022).

4 Why invest in inclusive social protection?

Each of the eight countries studied for this paper has signed up to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, affirming that all children – without discrimination based on their nationality, origin or status – have the right to social security, good quality health care, education, an adequate standard of living and protection from violence, abuse and neglect (among others). Under this convention, governments must do all they can to ensure that all children are protected and cared for and must provide social security, including financial support and other benefits to families in need of assistance.

All eight countries have also signed up to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which, under the principle of non-discrimination on the grounds of nationality, origin or status, also recognises the right of every person to social security, education and the highest attainable standard of health, as well as special measures to protect children and young persons from economic and social exploitation.

These are just two of the many legal instruments compelling governments to invest in inclusive social protection, including those explicitly focused on the rights of migrants and displaced populations.¹⁹

Yet, beyond the legal and human rights imperative, there are also numerous practical gains that may be derived from extending social protection to displaced children and families. As illustrated in Section 3, national social protection programmes have rarely been accessible to displaced people for long enough or at sufficient scale to comprehensively document these benefits. However, an emerging evidence base from national social protection interventions for host communities, as well as non-governmental organisation (NGO) and UN interventions for displaced populations, can offer important insights into the benefits that could be gained from serving displaced children and families through inclusive social protection systems.

This section draws on available evidence to outline the potential benefits of investing in inclusive social protection for displaced populations in relation to four areas: (1) protecting children and families, (2) boosting local economies, (3) promoting social cohesion and (4) strengthening state institutions.

4.1 Protecting children and families

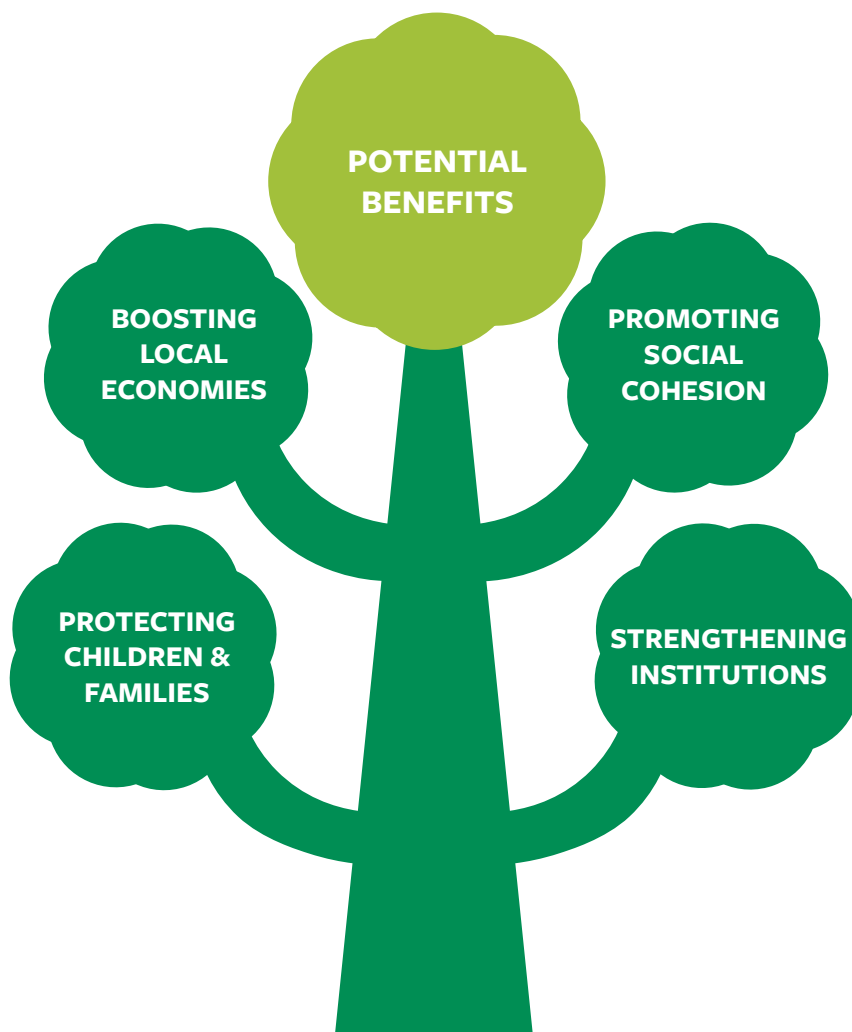
There is strong evidence from around the world that the delivery of regular and predictable social protection reduces poverty, smooths consumption and increases access to services (Bastagli et al., 2016; Tripathi et al., 2019). Recent evidence from large-scale social protection

¹⁹ For example, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda have ratified the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees 1951 and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees 1967, while Egypt and Uganda have also ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, 1990. More recent commitments include the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, both adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2018. For further details on key international frameworks and commitments, see ILO (2021e).

programmes for citizens in Egypt and Ethiopia, for example, continues to demonstrate positive outcomes associated with reducing poverty, improving food security and supporting access to

health and education of the poorest households and their children (Berhane et al. 2014; Hoddinott et al. 2017; Breisinger et al., 2018).

Figure 1 Potential benefits of investing in inclusive social protection for displaced populations



Source: Authors

Extending social protection to refugees and asylum seekers has also been found to increase their resilience and reduce poverty through ensuring income security and reducing social exclusion and vulnerability (ILO, 2021c). Evidence from social protection programmes

that include displaced populations show positive impacts. In Iraq, for example, displaced households who receive the state's PDS food distribution are more food secure, less poor and less vulnerable to poverty than displaced households that have lost access to the PDS (Phadera et al., 2020). In

Lebanon, an initial study of the relatively new UNICEF-established child grant programme, *Haddi*, reaching poor Lebanese and non-Lebanese recipients, indicates positive effects on household expenditure on food, education, clothes and rent as well as on children's wellbeing (note that findings are from a six-month midline survey of a sample of 362 households that had received transfers in comparison to a control, and findings cannot be disaggregated by nationality) (UNICEF Lebanon, 2021).

Similar findings can be seen from an evaluation in Uganda of the state-led, World Bank-supported NUSAF III labour-intensive public works, income support and livelihoods programmes and the DRDIP livelihoods component, which target displaced and host beneficiaries alike – the percentage of deprived households surveyed decreased from 82% to 56% for NUSAF III participants, and from 87% to 66% for DRDIP participants (based on surveys between November 2019 and March 2021) (UNICEF et al., 2021a). Reductions were seen for both adults and children, and the findings are seen as particularly positive given the onset and spread of Covid-19 during this period (ibid.).

Although evidence on the impacts of inclusion of displaced populations in social protection systems in many countries is still nascent, there is also a growing body of evidence which demonstrates the positive impacts of humanitarian interventions. Such programmes often use social protection modalities (e.g. cash transfers) and are increasingly delivered over multiple years. This evidence demonstrates the positive impacts on household consumption and improving food security throughout the duration of receiving transfers. Evidence from internationally funded, multipurpose cash assistance for Syrian refugees in Jordan and

Lebanon, for example, demonstrates reductions in the poverty rate among refugees and the prevention of negative coping strategies (Verme et al., 2016; Abu Hamad et al., 2017; Bastagli et al., 2020; Chaaban et al., 2020). However, it is also noted that the positive effects of cash transfers are not sustained after they have ended, nor are they always adequate to address the multiple vulnerabilities that displaced populations face (Bastagli et al., 2020). This highlights the need for a longer-term and more sustainable approach to support displaced households through regular and predictable transfers, as well as the need for adequate benefits and linkages to other services and programmes, for example through 'cash plus' approaches, to meet their multiple needs (Bastagli et al., 2020; Chaaban et al., 2020; Phadera et al., 2020).

Such programmes can also have important impacts on the specific risks that displaced children and youth face. Existing evidence shows relatively consistent effects of assistance in supporting displaced children's access to school and utilisation of healthcare. For example, in Jordan, studies of the UNHCR cash transfer, UNICEF child cash grant programme and WFP food vouchers were associated with improved spending on schooling and academic performance (although no impact on enrolment) (Abu-Hamad et al., 2017). This project was also associated with increased spending on child health (but not on adult health) as well as contributing to better nutritional and child health outcomes (Ibid.). The UNICEF *Hajati* cash transfer programme in Jordan has also been successful in encouraging the education of vulnerable children – the impact evaluation of the programme in 2021 showed that children benefiting from the programme are 5% more likely to go to school and 2.3% less likely to be engaged in economic activities (UNICEF Innocenti, 2021). Similar findings are also reported in the multi-sectoral *Makani* programme

that supports access to services (also in Jordan), with children who attend *Makani* 50% more likely to be enrolled in school compared to similar groups not attending *Makani* and also showing better learning and social outcomes, including in relation to social connectedness, self-confidence, awareness of violence and wellbeing (Jones et al., 2019; Presler-Marsall et al., 2019). Similarly, in Lebanon, studies of the WFP basic assistance cash transfer for Syrian refugees (Bastagli et al., 2020) and UNICEF and WFP's Cash Transfer Program for Displaced Syrian Children (AIR and UNICEF Innocenti, 2018) found that the transfers increase school attendance by supporting households to meet associated school costs including travel, school supplies and clothing.

Furthermore, when households have the means to meet basic material needs, this can also improve the mental health of both displaced children and their parents. A recent study of UNICEF and WFP's cash transfer for Syrian refugees (also in Lebanon) demonstrated positive impacts on recipient children's mental health, in part thanks to greater access to education as mentioned above (AIR and UNICEF Innocenti, 2018). The quantitative data showed significant improvements in children's optimism about the future, confidence and assertiveness when they were participating in the education cash transfer scheme, while the qualitative research highlighted positive changes in children's behaviour, happiness and aspirations (AIR and UNICEF Innocenti, 2018). This builds on earlier studies in Lebanon which found empirical evidence of the positive impacts of humanitarian cash transfers on parents and caretakers' mental health, which are likely to be felt by children as well (Foster, 2015; Battistin, 2016). However, although the latter study found adult recipients to generally be happier than non-recipients, they were also more stressed about financial issues (Battistin, 2016). The researchers suggest that this may be

explained by recipients' sense that assistance is precarious and could easily be discontinued, indicating the need for more predictable and stable forms of support than short-term, volatile humanitarian assistance can provide.

Ensuring material and psychosocial needs are consistently met can also reduce the need to resort to detrimental coping strategies, such as sexual exploitation, child labour and neglect, family separation, forced marriage and other forms of exploitation and abuse (UNHCR, 2020b). As discussed above, these types of risks are likely to be exacerbated for displaced children and adolescents. There is some positive evidence that humanitarian programmes can contribute to a reduction in some of these risks. For example, the multi-country study of cash transfers in Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt reported decreased engagement in the worst forms of child labour such as survival sex, and diminished risk of exposure to violence, abuse and neglect, thereby increasing the safety of children. Reductions were also reported in child labour, including total number of hours worked (UNHCR, 2019). In Lebanon, findings from a WFP basic assistance cash transfer found a decrease in the recurrence of early marriage of Syrian refugee girls – a common occurrence which has been increasing due to growing economic pressures (Bastagli et al., 2020). The same study also notes that physical security and safety within the household also seemed to improve (see more in Section 4.3).

However, child and gender protection risks are complex and require multiple and integrated interventions, and positive effects of programmes are not found across the board. In Jordan, for example, Giordano et al. (2017), carrying out a synthesis evaluation of UNHCR's cash-based interventions, found no change in

child labour outcomes. And in Lebanon, findings from the WFP basic assistance cash transfer for Syrian refugees found that despite positive effects on children's education, children still worked – commonly in combination with attending school – to supplement income (Bastagli et al., 2020). Some of this work was described – by transfer recipients and non-recipients – as dangerous, exploitative and unsafe (ibid.). When combined with the earlier evidence on the variable impacts on recipients' mental health, these findings illustrate that cash alone, particularly in low levels or when delivered in an unpredictable manner, is often not sufficient to overcome longer-term structural challenges of poverty and marginalisation.

These findings point to the importance of careful programme design – considering both issues of adequacy and predictability of programme benefits, as well as additional programme components or strategic linkages to other programmes and services – to meet the range of needs and reduce the specific risks that children and adolescents in a context of displacement face (see also Box 1). Examples of evidence from other forms of child protection

programmes show the breadth of the types of complementary programmes that can be considered. For example, a parenting programme and life skills and safe spaces programme for adolescent refugee girls in Ethiopia reported decreased incidence of child marriage (although no change in girls' reporting of experience of any form of violence) (Stark et al., 2018). Similarly, in a cluster evaluation of ILO-supported programmes to prevent child labour among refugees and host communities in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, the multi-sectoral nature of the programme was attributed to positive outcomes (Chiodi, 2018). The project included linkages between the countries' regular national systems and projects on eliminating child labour with national and international efforts around the Syrian refugee response, and provided a combination of educational, psychosocial, nutritional and livelihood services and referrals (ibid.). And in Uganda, Okello et al. (2018) conducted an evaluation of a lifesaving shelter, protection (against gender-based violence, or GBV) and health support programme for South Sudanese refugees, finding that the case management approach to identify and support GBV survivors was highly effective in encouraging survivors to seek support.

Box 1 Supporting education and child protection outcomes for refugee children and youth in Turkey

The Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) in Turkey aims to support the school enrolment and improve the attendance of Turkish children in poverty since 2003. It was extended to Syrian and other refugee families in mid-2017, with financial support from the European Union. The CCTE for refugees is implemented by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, the Ministry of National Education, the Turkish Red Crescent and UNICEF. Between May 2017 and March 2020, the programme met with and assisted 75,390 children in 15 provinces, with a focus on ensuring continued school enrolment and attendance of the most vulnerable refugee children as well as their referral to child protection services when needed. The programme also aims to reduce specific risks faced by refugee children and youth such as involvement in child labour, child marriage, physical and emotional violence and family separation, through a component implemented by outreach teams consisting of social workers and translators (CCTE Factsheet, 2020).

An evaluation of the programme found that the integration of the child protection component helped families overcome the non-financial barriers to children's schooling in a complex operating environment (Ring et al., 2020). The child protection visits, in particular, were important in identifying and overcoming barriers to school enrolment such as language barriers, overcrowding and disabilities that prevented families from registering their children for school. Learning from the child protection component also indicated that in some contexts refugee boys were just as vulnerable as girls to dropping out of school, especially due to higher risk of child labour, whilst other gendered risks impacted girls disproportionately, such as child marriage and GBV (ibid.).

Furthermore, the involvement of outreach teams of social workers and translators was seen as effective in facilitating access for refugee families to available services to address health, psychosocial and economic needs, but limited institutional capacity and the complexity of the humanitarian context in which it was operating meant that the child protection component was unable to meet the high demand for services (ibid.).

Experiences from implementing social care and specialised services demonstrate the need for investments in the capacity of programmes to deliver interventions which address the complex risks that children face. For example, Van der Veen et al. (2015), in their evaluation of UNICEF's Psychosocial Response for Syrian Children in Jordan 2013–2014 (providing support through child-friendly spaces and strengthening community child protection capacity), find positive impacts on children's emotional wellbeing after attending child-friendly spaces, but that more in-depth training for staff was needed to equip them with the skills to deal with the range of child protection violations and challenges they encountered. Similar findings were reported from the ILO-supported programmes reducing child labour, which found that training of fieldworkers and NGOs on child labour prevention and risks of the worst forms of child labour, as well as capacity building of counsellors to reach vulnerable children, were important components of the programme (Chiodi, 2018).

4.2 Boosting local economies

While the inclusion of displaced populations in social protection systems inevitably entails upfront costs, there is also evidence that extending social protection to displaced children and families has the potential to generate notable economic benefits.

In relation to contributory systems, there is evidence that including refugees in the formal labour market not only allows them to better support their families, but also results in important economic benefits for host countries (Clemens et al., 2018). With effective labour market policies to support host and displaced populations, refugees can contribute to the host economy by filling labour shortages, complementing hosts' skills and expanding the labour supply, as well as creating new businesses and employment opportunities (ibid.). When refugees work and earn income, they and their families also spend more at local businesses, with positive multiplier effects in the economy (ibid.).

These global findings have also been evident in countries in the PROSPECTS partnership. For example, a recent study on the potential impacts of greater economic inclusion of refugees in Ethiopia estimates strong benefits for host communities (Graham and Miller, 2021). With greater freedom to work and move, refugees would be able to apply their skills more widely in the labour market, thus benefiting local businesses that could in turn spend more in the economy and potentially employ more people. Refugees would also be more able to start formal (and larger) businesses that could employ more locals and facilitate increased trade with their neighbouring countries of origin. Higher incomes would also allow refugees and their families to spend more in the economy, generating further gains for local businesses (*ibid.*).

Working in the formal labour market also allows displaced people to contribute to the social security system of their host country (ILO, 2021c). This can have positive impacts on the system itself, as more contributors can help to expand the tax base, spread risk across a larger pool of members and enhance the financial sustainability of these schemes (*ibid.*). Furthermore, inclusion in contributory schemes can reduce pressures on tax-funded social protection or the need to provide assistance through a humanitarian response (*ibid.*). Recent examples of this include programmes in Kenya (as well as in Rwanda and Ghana) that have supported the capacity of refugees to pay into national health insurance schemes (UNHCR, 2021b). This can also have further multiplier effects by maintaining or improving workers' health and improving public health indicators (ILO, 2021d).

It is also increasingly being recognised that non-contributory social protection mechanisms can help to drive inclusive growth

and sustainable development, including by accelerating women's economic empowerment (as outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development) (UNICEF, 2017; ILO, 2021d). Regular cash transfers, for example, can support poor households to accumulate productive assets, obtain credit on better terms and, in some cases, to diversify into higher risk, higher return activities (UNICEF and FAO, 2015; Zhu et al., 2016; UNICEF, 2017). Moreover, social protection builds human capital through improving human development, particularly for children, generating medium- and long-term impacts on economies (UNICEF, 2017). Social protection programmes can also be particularly important in supporting women's participation in economic opportunities, which has been shown to have positive impacts on women's economic empowerment and, more broadly, can increase productivity, economic diversification and income equality (Bastagli et al., 2016; IMF, 2018; UN Women, 2018; Perera et al., 2022). Evidence from cash transfers and cash-for-work programmes for refugees in Lebanon and Jordan, for example, indicates that they can support women to better manage childcare and paid work opportunities (particularly important for female-headed households) and encourage acceptance of female labour participation (Bastagli et al., 2020; Loewe et al., 2020; Lombardini and Mager, 2020).

There is also evidence that assistance to displaced people generates positive multiplier effects in the local economy. Zhu et al. (2016) demonstrate the economic impacts of refugees in Uganda receiving WFP cash assistance, finding that an average refugee household receiving the cash transfer in two different settlements increases annual real income in the local economy by 3.8 million Ugandan shillings (US\$1,106) and by 3.7 million shillings (US\$1,072) in the two areas. These spillover effects are created when cash is spent

on goods and services supplied within the local economy, and primarily accrue to host-country households and businesses in the local area where the cash is distributed and, more widely, when households and businesses buy goods and services outside the local economy (ibid). In Jordan, cash transfers in the food security sector are estimated to have injected an estimated US\$3 billion into host economies, stimulating growth to the benefit of refugees, host communities and governments (R-UNDG Working Group on Social Protection,

2018). In Jordan and Lebanon, cash assistance to refugees has supported a network of more than 700 contracted retail shops to diversify their produce and expand their operations (ibid). Cash-for-work programmes have also been shown to have positive multiplier effects when wages are spent locally, as well as community-wide benefits relating to the creation and maintenance of public goods, and investment of additional income into new income-generating activities (Loewe and Zintl, 2021).

Box 2 Colombia and the benefits of progressive refugee-hosting policies

Since 2015, more than 2 million Venezuelans have been displaced to Colombia as a result of economic and political turmoil – making them the second-largest refugee population in the world. The Colombian government has been widely acclaimed for its hospitable response, including granting Venezuelans a 10-year residence permit that provides them with rights to employment, healthcare, education and financial inclusion, among others. Venezuelan families and children have had access to various forms of social protection. Although they are not targeted by the main routine cash transfer for vulnerable families, they can potentially receive support through school feeding programmes, early childhood development services of the Colombian Institute of Family Wellbeing, the social health insurance system, food packages and emergency cash assistance during Covid-19, as well as the ability to participate in the contributory social security system (albeit with many limitations to access in practice).

This progressive legal framework has been labelled a ‘model of pragmatism and humanity’ (UNHCR and IOM, 2021), and was in part motivated by a recognition of the clear economic and social benefits that the country would derive from inclusion. The government estimated that GDP could grow by an average of 0.2–0.9 percentage points between 2018 and 2021 if the influx was well-managed. Investing in the education and health of Venezuelans is also seen as critical for enabling long-term human capital accumulation. This not only benefits the Venezuelans themselves but also enhances outcomes for the wider population. However, these policies have at times led to tensions with citizens who feel their own needs are being neglected, making it important to raise public awareness of the benefits that refugees can bring. It also highlights the importance of international support to help the government roll out the progressive refugee response while stepping up provision for vulnerable citizens (as has been increasingly evident since 2019, notably with the extension of concessional loans to the country through the World Bank-managed GCF).

Source: Government of Colombia (2018); World Bank (2018); Ham et al. (2022); Palomo et al. (2022)

4.3 Promoting social cohesion

Beyond the economic dividends discussed above, assisting displacement-affected populations may also help to promote social cohesion, both *between* displaced and host communities and *within* those communities.

Drawing on analysis of both governmental and non-governmental programming, various studies suggest that assistance can in some cases support positive relations between host and displaced communities.

In Lebanon, for example, several studies have documented the positive effects of humanitarian cash transfers received by refugees on relations with host communities, including more positive host community attitudes towards Syrian refugees, as well as increased trust in the host community among refugee recipients (Lehmann and Masterson, 2014; R-UNDG Working Group, 2018; Samuels et al., 2020). Some of the reasons behind this effect include the income enabling recipients to buy more local goods and services, meet with Lebanese friends, re-pay debts and make rent payments on time, have less perceived need to resort to theft or begging out of poverty and desperation, and sometimes share the aid with hosts. Qualitative research from humanitarian cash and cash-plus programmes for Syrian refugees in Jordan also found positive effects on inter-community relations for similar reasons (Sloane, 2014; Yoshikawa, 2015).

Positive findings are also reported as a result of host and displaced communities building better relationships due to opportunities to interact in programmes targeting both groups.

This has been the case in the *Makani* programme in Jordan, which uses a vulnerability approach to cover multiple groups in the communities –

host communities and different refugee groups (including children, youth and parents) – and promotes interaction at *Makani* centres run by local partners (Samuel Hall and UNICEF, 2021). Similarly, Jordanians and refugees have participated jointly in cash-for-work programmes (which have largely been run by humanitarian programmes but often with government involvement), resulting in increased cooperation and trust between participants as well as an increased sense of belonging in the community among refugees (Loewe et al., 2020).

However, these outcomes are not automatic or guaranteed, and in some cases neutral or even negative effects have instead been documented.

A mixed-methods study of UNICEF's child cash grant, UNHCR's cash transfer and WFP food vouchers for Syrian refugees in Jordan found little evidence of the transfers improving inter-community relations, largely because the amount was deemed insufficient to alter the nature or level of refugees' participation in the community (Abu-Hamad et al., 2017). Meanwhile, assistance has been a trigger for tensions in Lebanon, with long queues and waiting times at ATMs sparking arguments between Syrian transfer recipients and local Lebanese communities (Samuels et al., 2020; KII). This challenge has been exacerbated by Lebanon's financial collapse as people can only access ATMs at their own bank, which has further lengthened queues and led to several violent incidents at ATMs each week, partly related to the fact that ATM users are overwhelmingly Syrians and are seen to be emptying the ATMs in front of Lebanese (Samuels et al., 2020; KII). Since 2020, some agencies such as UNICEF have opted to no longer rely on ATMs in cash transfer programming for these reasons, instead using a wide network of over-the-counter agents for distribution (KII).

Other studies also note tensions where programmes are felt to target displaced community recipients without support also being stepped up for host communities, or when local populations feel the displaced population's presence and programming is contributing to increases in housing prices and reduced wages or job opportunities (Yoshikawa, 2015; Samuels et al., 2020; Lowe et al., 2022a). Furthermore, there are indications that where assistance has historically targeted only one refugee group (e.g. Syrians ahead of any other nationality in Jordan), this is perceived as unfair by those not covered (i.e. non-Syrian refugees in Jordan, as well as vulnerable Jordanians) and can further exacerbate exclusion and tensions (Gray Meral et al., 2022).

This indicates that the biggest point of tension often relates to whether the range of available programming is perceived to unfairly target one group and leave vulnerable households in the rest of the population excluded – reinforcing the case for universal systems of protection where both vulnerable host and displaced populations have adequate access to support (KII; Lowe et al., 2022a). These concerns can be further exacerbated in the context of scarce resources, conflict, increasing poverty and economic crises (O'Callaghan, 2018, Crawford et al. 2019; Idris 2020). In some cases, there may be greater tensions when displaced populations are served through state rather than non-governmental systems; however, in other cases the programme source may make little difference or there may even be greater cohesion when host and displaced populations are served jointly through national social protection systems (particularly when the presence of the displaced population is seen to have attracted funds to strengthen state provision in a previously under-served area) (Lowe et al., 2022a).

Box 3 Serving displaced populations through government systems in Uganda

A recent survey in Uganda showed popular support from Ugandans for the government's asylum policies, with 89% agreeing that the country serves as a good example to the rest of the world for how to assist refugees (IRC, 2018). Refugees and host communities share access to public services including healthcare and education, and support to areas hosting refugees (e.g. infrastructure improvements) is carried out in a way that not only meets the needs of refugees but continues to benefit host communities long after the refugees return home (UNHCR, 2017). Similar findings were reported by Zhou et al. (2022), who find that host communities with greater levels of refugee presence experienced substantial improvements in local development – access to healthcare, schools and roads – and that residents recognised these improvements. This suggests that resource allocation policies that benefit nearby communities can reduce potential backlash against refugees and improve social cohesion between host communities and refugees (ibid.).

In relation to impacts on relations *within* displaced communities and households, evidence also shows that social protection or humanitarian assistance can strengthen social cohesion and networks at this level. Evidence from Lebanon again shows that multipurpose basic assistance cash transfers are used to cover transportation costs to visit acquaintances and family (Samuels et al., 2020). In this case, there is also a strong sense of solidarity within the

community, with widespread perceptions that not all those in need are receiving cash leading to feelings of compassion (as well as discomfort) from recipients (ibid). In Jordan, the *Makani* programme of integrated services (which had an explicit focus on promoting interactions and adolescent and youth empowerment) also has important effects on the social networks for young people, particularly girls. This can be particularly important in contexts where restrictive social norms mean that women and girls are less likely to interact socially and publicly. Jones et al. (2022) find that participation in *Makani* was associated with an increase in the likelihood that the boy/girl had a trusted friend, with the impacts of interacting with friends larger for girls and for Syrians in host communities.

Evidence also indicates that social protection can have a positive impact on gender and generational relations within the household.

Global evidence shows that financial support to households can reduce poverty-related stress and improve intra-household relations (e.g. Buller et al., 2018), having a further positive impact on household trajectories out of poverty (Shepherd et al., 2019). In a review of WFP's basic assistance cash transfer in Lebanon, Bastagli et al. (2020) find improvements in intra-household relationships and reductions in tensions and violence both between spouses and between parents and children, largely as a result of reduced financial concerns. However, it is also noteworthy that respondents no longer receiving the transfer reported an increase in pressure and tensions, in some cases leading to physical violence. A small qualitative study of Syrian refugee families in Jordan also found that receiving humanitarian cash assistance reduced intra-household tensions (Sloane, 2014), and a study of humanitarian cash transfers and food vouchers for Syrian refugees in Jordan found improved intra-household relationships (Abu-Hamad et al., 2017).

There are also indications that government involvement in delivering services can have positive effects on recipients' relations with the state – but only if they are felt to be well designed and implemented. In Jordan, for example, cash-for-work programmes have been internationally financed and largely NGO-implemented, with varying levels of ministerial and municipal involvement. These programmes did not improve participants' impressions of the state where they felt that nepotism influenced the selection of participants or where they viewed the programme as being run by external agencies without state involvement. But where local authorities were seen to be actively involved and responsive to the needs of the community, it had a positive effect on participants' trust in the state (Loewe et al., 2020).

4.4 Strengthening institutions

Evidence suggests that efforts to include displaced children and families in social protection systems may also generate institutional benefits for the state.

Firstly, initiatives that improve displaced people's access to social protection often improve service provision for all, by enhancing the accessibility, sophistication, efficiency and shock-responsiveness of existing systems and programmes. For example, paper-based databases and inflexible registration and payment systems made it difficult for IDPs in Iraq to access their state PDS benefits in their new place of residence. This concern has been one of the drivers spurring international partners (including WFP and the World Bank) to work with the government on initiatives to digitalise the PDS. Initiatives include the development of an electronic database, biometric verification and smartcards in place of paper ration cards, and a single-window, mobile-

based application system (the MyPDS ‘Tamwini’ app) which enables households to more easily register and update their information (WFP, 2021). These new developments will not only improve the portability and accessibility of benefits for IDPs, they could also help to modernise the largest and longest-standing social protection programme in Iraq for all other recipients (over 90% of the population in Iraq) and generate potential cost savings for the government through more efficient digital systems.

Second, some governments have expanded overall social protection coverage by collaborating with international partners to develop new programming that serves displaced and host communities alike, thereby filling historic gaps in institutional provision. In Uganda, for example, the World Bank-funded DRDIP, implemented by the Office of the Prime Minister, is promoting the expansion of basic social services and economic infrastructure (including public works and livelihoods projects), improved environmental management and greater access to income-generating activities for both host and displaced communities (generally in a 70/30 ratio). The project also involves strengthening operational capacity and coordination at the national and local levels, as well as building system shock-responsiveness. The current phase of the project received \$150 million financing through the World Bank’s International Development Association (IDA) 18 Refugee Sub Window, which enables low-income countries with large refugee caseloads to access grants (and concessional loans) to develop their services and infrastructure to support displaced and host populations. As noted in Section 4.3, these investments are significant – and well-appreciated by the host population – in contexts where state social service provision is still relatively nascent.

Finally, there is evidence that programmes developed to serve displaced and non-displaced children and families have strengthened institutional knowledge and capacity to develop broader child-sensitive social protection systems. For example, in Jordan, the government’s capacity to provide child-sensitive social protection has continuously increased with learning from UNICEF-established programming (Samuel Hall and UNICEF, 2022). The *Makani* programme, providing integrated child- and youth-friendly services for both refugee and host communities, is now institutionalised within the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), which co-chairs the steering committee with UNICEF and operates a number of the local *Makani* centres. Systems for referring to and providing psychosocial, mental health, child protection, early child development, adolescent and youth services have all been enhanced. Building on this new state capacity, there is now a ‘*Takaful plus*’ initiative underway to improve the state’s existing cash transfer scheme for vulnerable Jordanian families (*Takaful*) by linking recipients to *Makani*’s complementary services, as well as learning from UNICEF’s child-sensitive *Hajati* cash transfer design (ibid).

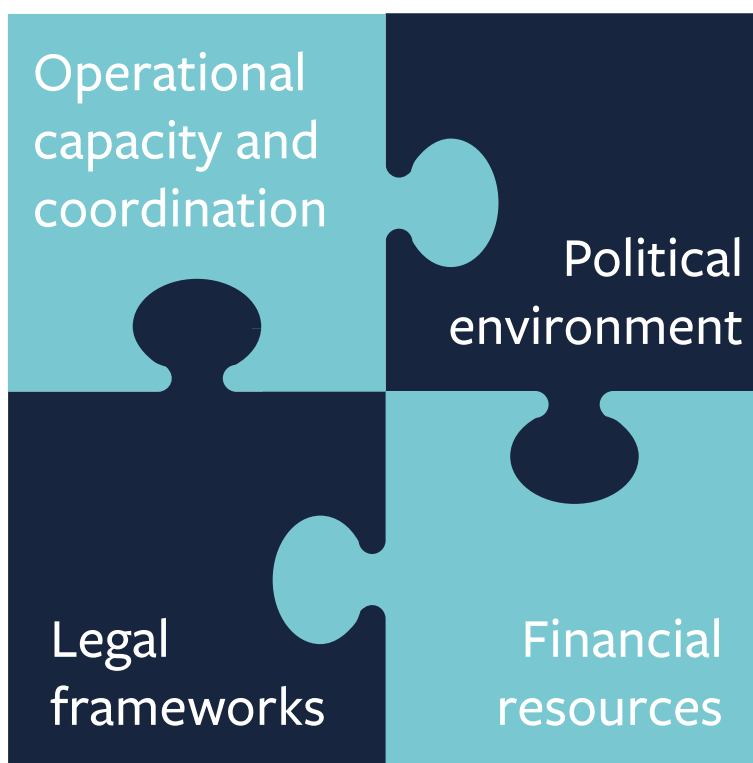
That said, it is also important for initiatives extending social protection to displaced children and families to be coupled with sufficient investments in the operational and financial resources required to facilitate inclusion. Where programmes or systems are expected to take on large numbers of new recipients without adequate funding, infrastructure or staff capacity, this can strain existing services and potentially weaken institutional capacity. This highlights the need for a conducive enabling environment to enable successful inclusion in practice, as discussed in the next section.

5 Opportunities and challenges for enhancing social protection

This section explores key opportunities and challenges influencing the inclusion of displaced children and families in social protection systems,

with examples from the PROSPECTS countries. The four key areas of opportunities and challenges are summarised in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Key opportunities / challenges for enhancing social protection for displaced children and families
Source: Authors



5.1 Legal frameworks

Where patchy or exclusionary, legal and policy frameworks may hinder access to social protection for displaced children and families.

Such challenges are particularly likely for refugee children and families. Firstly, national legislation granting displaced people the right

to legal residence in a country may be limited, as for example in Lebanon where 80% of Syrians lack legal residency and where Syrian labour is restricted to limited sectors, hindering their access to decent work and services (UNICEF et al., 2022b).

Even where national refugee laws are in effect, they may prohibit or restrict the right to social protection, employment or associated rights

(such as freedom of movement or access to documentation). For example, Kenya has not finalised legislation permitting inclusion in state social protection programmes (UNHCR, 2021b), and limitations on refugees' freedom of movement and access to work further hamper the path to inclusion (ibid). In the case of Sudan, refugees already have the right to social assistance and have the same employee rights as Sudanese citizens; however, freedom of movement to access these rights is limited for Eritreans and Ethiopian refugees in eastern Sudan due to a strict encampment policy. Furthermore, access to social insurance through formal employment requires a work permit, which had only been accorded to 0.1% of refugees based in the capital city in 2020 (with even lower rates elsewhere) (Holloway et al., forthcoming).

While IDPs typically have broader legal access to social protection, they may nevertheless be disadvantaged by policies that limit access to entitlements where a person is not a permanent or long-term resident – a challenge faced by some IDPs in Iraq (Higel, 2016) as well as in Ethiopia's PSNP (KII). Furthermore, both IDPs and refugees are over-represented in informal employment, which is generally poorly covered by social security legislation (ILO, 2021d). This means that displaced children and families often lack access to contributory benefits such as employment-based family and child allowances, parental leave or health insurance, which is the case across the countries included in the PROSPECTS partnership.

Strengthening legal and policy frameworks therefore presents an opportunity to improve displaced children and families' access to social protection – but only when followed up with robust implementation and necessary reforms to programme design. Several countries included in the PROSPECTS partnership have started to

develop a vision of greater inclusion through legal and policy reforms, and now require concerted efforts to implement these reforms in practice. For example, Ethiopia's National Comprehensive Refugee Response Strategy (developed in 2018) includes social protection as one of five key pillars, and its 2019 Refugee Proclamation expands legal rights to assistance and protections for refugee children, women and those with specific needs (Government of Ethiopia, 2019; PROSPECTS, 2020). In Uganda, the Revised Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework Road Map from 2018 set the goal of including refugees in the National Social Protection Policy, and the 2021 National Health Insurance Bill covers refugees (Lowe and Salomon, forthcoming). In Kenya, the new Social Assistance Bill currently under discussion covers the inclusion of refugees and, if passed, would enable county governments to expand coverage to the refugee population (KII). Meanwhile, in Iraq, a draft law (awaiting parliamentary approval) is expected to dramatically expand social insurance provisions, including for non-nationals (Lowe and Salomon, forthcoming).

5.2 Financing

The prioritisation and availability of financial resources inevitably plays a central role in determining the possibilities for including displaced children and families in social protection systems. Increasing evidence demonstrates that social protection is a cost-effective mechanism for reducing poverty (UNICEF, 2017), and as discussed in Section 4, inclusive policies allowing displaced people to work, contribute to the economy and pay into tax and social security systems can contribute to national budgets, thereby expanding the availability of domestic resources. However, these returns may not be generated immediately, which

may limit their ability to support the financing of inclusive social protection systems in the short term and increases the need for financing from other domestic or international sources.

Limited prioritisation of social protection in national financing strategies is often a challenge even for the host population,

particularly for non-contributory provision for vulnerable individuals and families. In the Arab states, northern Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, only 0.1%, 0.2% and 0.4% of GDP, respectively, is spent on social protection for children (excluding healthcare) (ILO, 2021e). This translates to low adequacy, comprehensiveness and coverage – in Kenya, Sudan and Jordan, for example, only 3.6%, 8.1% and 8.8% of children, respectively, are covered by social protection systems. Even in countries with relatively larger social assistance provision, many (non-displaced) citizens remain excluded. For example, in Egypt, despite the relatively large coverage and expansion of the *Takaful* and *Karama* cash transfer programmes for low-income families since Covid and the Ukraine crisis (it covers 19 million citizens (KII)), this is less than half of those living under the national lower-end poverty line, and less than a quarter of those living under the national upper-end poverty line. This is a stark reminder that many countries are still at an early stage in building robust, inclusive and child-sensitive social protection systems.

Fiscal challenges have increased in recent years, with the proportion of populations in need of assistance growing as a result of the pandemic, rising food and fuel costs and inflation, but fiscal resources to address their needs decreasing. In Uganda, for example, given the pandemic's impact on the economy, budget cuts are expected for many social policy areas, including education and social development (Government of Uganda, 2021). In many contexts,

the effects of the pandemic are hitting at the same time as other shocks and crises. High food prices and supply disruptions triggered by the Ukraine war are hitting the economies of many countries hard, including Egypt and Sudan (Breisenger et al., 2021). In Iraq, the effects of the pandemic have collided with a crash in oil prices, meaning the already precarious budget of the Ministry of Migration and Displacement has seen cuts, resulting in sporadic transfers (Lowe and Salomon, forthcoming). In Lebanon, the effects of the pandemic have combined with one of the world's worst economic crises since the 1850s (World Bank, 2022). Domestic revenues are therefore scarce and access to international financing has in some cases also been restricted. In Sudan, for example, the ratio of public debt to GDP is 200% and international financing was suspended following the military coup in October 2021 (WPR, 2022; KII).

That said, PROSPECTS countries also offer examples of governments successfully securing innovative or additional financing to help improve social protection provision, for displaced and host populations alike.

In some cases, this has included financing through non-traditional domestic sources. In Sudan, for example, access for IDPs (and other vulnerable households) to the National Health Insurance Scheme has in part been subsidised by the Zakat Fund, which is managed by a semi-autonomous agency and financed by mandatory contributions from Muslim individuals and companies earning over a certain amount. In Jordan, contributions to the Zakat Fund are voluntary but the fund is noteworthy for making both citizens and non-citizens eligible, thereby on paper including refugees (although the actual number of refugee recipients is not known) (Röth et al., 2017; Hammad, 2022).

In Iraq, the government's 2021 White Paper proposes important economic reforms such as the allocation of greater funds to more targeted programmes of support (including those targeting IDPs), in part by improving the efficiency of quasi-universal subsidy programmes (WFP et al., 2021).

In other cases, international financing has provided important opportunities to develop more inclusive social protection systems (albeit with sustainability challenges, as discussed below). In Kenya, international investments targeting refugee-hosting areas, coupled with UNHCR support, are facilitating the inclusion of refugees and host communities in government social protection programmes – for example, through subsidised access to the national health insurance scheme (UNHCR, 2021b). In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, securing consistent funding from the federal budget has been challenging, so the regional government has relied on funding from international partners to expand social protection programmes in covering host communities, IDPs and refugees the region (Lowe and Salomon, forthcoming). In Lebanon, international non-concessional financing has also enabled the launch of the new *Haddi* child grant cash transfer targeting vulnerable children (35% nationals, 65% non-nationals, including refugees), which is managed by UNICEF and implemented in collaboration with the government (KII). The forthcoming National Disability Allowance will also include both nationals and non-nationals (split projected at 60% national, 40% non-national), funded by the European Union and other donors, implemented by UNICEF in partnership with the ILO and led by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

These financing sources have been important for expanding inclusive social protection provision, but the lack of predictable long-term financing continues to be a challenge,

albeit with some recent improvements. Much of the international funding for displacement responses continues to be provided as humanitarian assistance, with limited multi-year projects (Tebaldi, 2019). For example, in 2019, 74% of bilateral assistance for refugee situations went to humanitarian rather than development assistance, often with a project lifespan of a year or less (Hesemann et al., 2021). However, there have been some encouraging increases in development-oriented and longer-term funds being provided. For example, Jordan and Lebanon have received funds from the Global Concessional Financing Facility (GCFF), a World Bank-managed fund providing support on highly concessional terms to middle-income countries affected by large-scale refugee crises. Projects have included a \$200 million public works project building roads and creating short-term jobs for Lebanese and refugees, and a \$500 million equitable growth and job creation project in Jordan waiving work permit fees for Syrians, introducing a minimum wage and strengthening social assistance institutions, benefiting both citizens and Syrian refugees (GCFF, n.d.).

5.3 Operational capacity and coordination

Operational capacity determines the opportunities or challenges associated with extending protections to displaced children and families in practice. A highly capable social protection system is one that is mature, effective and inclusive, operating at a large scale and with the ability to respond flexibly to different types of shocks. In practice, this means having adequate staffing capacity and administrative systems for each phase of service delivery – including comprehensive and reliable underlying data or information systems – as well as effective frameworks and mechanisms for coordination

between the various actors involved in social protection delivery for displaced children and families.

Gaps in capacity often hinder a government's ability to provide inclusive social protection in practice. For example, in Sudan, a comprehensive social protection strategy has yet to be published, many programmes are still nascent with limited coverage, and the government lacks much of the data and administrative systems that would be needed to effectively roll out social protection to IDPs and refugees (Holloway et al., forthcoming). In Uganda, the effective number and range of social assistance programmes into which refugees can potentially be integrated is even more limited and there are no child-focused social protection programmes operating at the national level, meaning refugee (and host) children can only be directly served if they reside in the areas of pilot projects (Tran and Ghadilly, 2021).

Even in contexts such where social protection coverage is much greater, coordination can be a challenge. In Iraq, the PDS food subsidy scheme has historically covered over 95% of the population and the MOLSA cash transfer for low-income families covers around one-fifth of the population; however, the inclusion of displaced people is hindered by wide-ranging practical bottlenecks, including lack of documentation, and infrequent, inaccessible and non-portable registration processes (OECD and EBA, 2022). These operational bottlenecks are reinforced by perceived siloes between the government ministries responsible for identification, the PDS, wider social protection, poverty reduction data and displacement operations, as well as between the federal government and Kurdistan Regional Government, and with and between international partners. Interoperability between the relevant agency databases is limited, making it

difficult for government officials in one location to enable an IDP family to access the relevant social protection services in their new location.

However, there are also many examples of improvements in operational capacity and coordination enhancing (current or potential) inclusion of displaced children and families.

Some of these improvements relate to enhanced information on displaced families in government databases, which increases the state's ability to identify and include them in current or future state programmes. In Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, refugees have started to be included in regular household surveys, improving data on their vulnerability levels and associated social protection needs (UNHCR, 2021a). In Kenya, refugee inclusion in the Covid-19 national socioeconomic survey has provided an opportunity to discuss their permanent inclusion in the national social registry (UNHCR, 2021b). Furthermore, investment in the national child protection information management system to identify and register children with vulnerabilities will also include refugee children, and will be used to support the targeting of cash-based interventions by UNICEF and partners to support unaccompanied and separated children (KII). In Sudan, effective collaboration between humanitarian and government agencies helped the government to overcome gaps in IDP data for the rollout of the Sudan Family Support Programme (prior to the October 2021 coup). WFP was one of the government's implementing partners for the programme rollout and it began distributions using its own database, which included a large proportion of IDPs. WFP was also enlisted to support the government to develop payments and feedback systems for the SFSP, enabling delivery mechanisms to be designed with IDPs' needs in mind, based on WFP's extensive experience providing transfers

to displaced populations (WFP, 2020). In Iraq, discussions between humanitarian agencies, donors and the government are underway to consider potential pathways for transitioning humanitarian caseloads (including many IDPs) to the state social safety net scheme. These have included workshops between government, humanitarian and donor agencies to develop a roadmap for transitioning from humanitarian cash assistance to state-led social protection, including developing and testing a model to help identify which current humanitarian cash recipients would be eligible and likely to register for the state's social safety net (Obi et al., 2022).

Other examples relate to state efforts to address practical bottlenecks hindering displaced families from accessing existing social protection schemes, often in collaboration with international actors and other government agencies. For example, the government of Iraq has taken various practical steps to ensure that existing schemes are more operationally accessible to IDP families, including to improve the portability of benefits, connect relevant government databases, simplify documentation requirements, improve access to ID/documentation and provide more accessible platforms for households to register, verify and update their information. Among others, these efforts include advancing the digitalisation of the PDS – notably with WFP – and improving IDPs' documentation, information and referrals to government services through mobile registration units and one-stop shops in community resource centres – notably with the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

A third set of operational improvements relate to enhanced state capacity to deliver child-sensitive social protection schemes, for displaced and host children alike. As noted

in Section 4.4, this has been the case with the *Makani* programme in Jordan. It is also the case in Uganda, where the Girls Empowering Girls (GEG) programme (co-run by the Kampala Capital City Authority and UNICEF) and the Child-Sensitive Social Protection programme (implemented by WFP and UNICEF, in collaboration with the government) are enhancing the government's capacity to provide tailored social protection for host and displaced children and families, thereby increasing the possibility that these groups will be included in institutionalised national programmes in future.

5.4 Political environment

As summarised in Lowe and Cherrier (2022), 'actors often matter more than contextual factors' in relation to the inclusion of displaced children and families in social protection systems.

In this sense, opportunities and challenges for inclusion initiatives directly reflect the political stakeholders involved in developing inclusive social protection policies and programmes, and their interests, motivation and attitudes towards the displaced population.

In some contexts, such as Lebanon, political concerns about the long-term integration of the displaced population may prevent government officials from explicitly announcing inclusive policies and programmes, since they may wish to avoid any association with initiatives that appear to encourage prolonged residence of displaced people in the host location. In other contexts, there may be strong political and public support for displaced children and families, often reflecting solidarity or sympathy with their plight or recognising the substantial economic benefits that they can bring. In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, for example, inclusive policies are facilitated by

the shared religion, language, ethnic identity and experience of Syrian refugees and their Kurdish hosts, as well as a widespread recognition of the value that skilled Syrian workers can bring to the local labour market (Lowe and Salomon, forthcoming). Political will may also be divided depending on whether politicians view social protection for displaced – as well as non-displaced – people as unaffordable handouts that encourage dependence (as has been the case to some extent in Uganda) or whether they recognise that social protection can be a tool to promote self-reliance, which will ultimately increase displaced people’s capacity to pay into national schemes and systems (as is in part evident in Kenya) (KIIs). Furthermore, political willingness for the inclusion of displaced populations in social protection may vary depending on the specific displaced group in question. For example, Egypt’s inclusion policies towards refugees of different nationalities have varied significantly based on international relations and diplomatic concerns (Andrade et al., 2021).

Beyond political will, other determining factors relate to the nature and extent of governance and political stability in the country. In Sudan, political uncertainty is a major challenge for enhancing social protection coverage for the displaced, as well as the host population, following the October 2021 coup and growing insecurity in certain parts of the country (OECD and EBA, 2022; ILO, 2022). The rollout of major social protection projects has stalled not only due to operational uncertainty but also because the projects were due to be internationally financed. International funding was paused following the coup, and with the current fiscal crisis limited resources are available to promote social protection inclusion goals (ibid.). More generally, political barriers

may pose unique problems for IDPs, since certain crises, such as active conflict, may render state provision inappropriate or infeasible for specific territories or populations.

Conversely, resolution of conflict or reductions in violence and fragility represent an important opportunity to improve social protection policies and programmes for all vulnerable populations, including traditionally marginalised displaced groups. This has been the case in Iraq in recent years, with improved security conditions and more manageable IDP caseloads offering greater opportunities to build national systems that better address various vulnerabilities, including those of IDPs and refugees (Lowe and Salomon, forthcoming). That said, crises themselves may sometimes offer opportunities to improve social protection systems. To the extent that it is appropriate to engage with national systems, humanitarian responses may be able to link with the social protection programmes, policies or administration mechanisms in a way that strengthens them for future provision (SPACE, 2021). In Lebanon, for example, the national social assistance system has been continuously fortified through strategic alignment with humanitarian assistance (Smith, 2020; KII). Care should also be taken, however, to ensure that humanitarian-social protection linkages are not undertaken in a manner that presents adverse risks for the affected populations (Lowe and Cherrier, 2022). For example, channelling humanitarian assistance via state systems would not be appropriate where the latter are unable to reliably distribute assistance to the population in question, or where displaced people may be unable or unwilling to access state systems.

6 Learning from good practices and looking forward

It is clear that urgent responses are needed to the high and growing levels of poverty and vulnerability faced by populations affected by displacement. Children and youth are disproportionately impacted by displacement, and also face some of the highest risks and vulnerabilities. Social protection can be an important mechanism to address these challenges.

As this paper and wider literature²⁰ have demonstrated, investments in inclusive social protection for displaced families and children can help improve their immediate circumstances and life-long possibilities, presenting a potential opportunity to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

Such investments are also a valuable opportunity for the host country, with the potential to bring substantial benefits for the country as a whole. Strengthening inclusive social protection systems can support progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, with the potential to help generate economic dividends, promote social cohesion and strengthen state institutions and, in turn, the social contract. To achieve these outcomes, however, concerted efforts by governments and development partners are needed to strengthen the inclusion of displaced populations in appropriate and adequate social protection systems, whilst also being sensitive to public perceptions and demands (Commins et al., 2022). Recognising the significant fiscal and political challenges faced by countries at this time, we conclude with four key overarching policy

recommendations for strengthening inclusive social protection for families and children in the future.

1. Invest in developing social protection systems that are inclusive of refugees and IDPs as part of a broader strategy to promote universal access to comprehensive and shock-responsive social protection that responds to children’s needs, recognising the important benefits that such investments can bring.

While many countries have made good progress towards stronger national social protection systems, there are still significant gaps in the adequacy, coverage, comprehensiveness and child-sensitivity of provision for host as well as displaced communities. Refugees and IDPs also tend to have differential access to social protection, both in terms of their entitlements (with refugees not eligible for many programmes) and the barriers they face even if they are entitled to access on paper.

Specific initiatives to improve access for displaced children and families should therefore be undertaken as part of broader efforts to expand and strengthen social protection for all – and to ensure that the system is resilient to shocks. This requires building on the momentum generated by increased international support for expanding social protection systems and for finding sustainable solutions for displaced populations.

20 For example, see UNICEF (2017), UN (2018), USP2030 (2019) and ILO (2021d).

Support is also needed for generating data and knowledge sharing on international experiences, and to leverage international financing for displacement (see further below).

Moreover, to promote the development of truly inclusive social protection systems, it is important to understand the gaps and challenges for refugees and IDPs and to work towards the inclusion of displaced children and families of all nationalities, rather than pursuing nationality-specific programming on a continued basis.

These aspects are especially important given the wide-ranging social and economic risks and vulnerabilities present in displacement-affected regions, and the growing frequency and impacts of economic, health, conflict and climate crises. Strengthening national social protection systems and ensuring that they are resilient and responsive to the specific needs of all children and youth in the country, including those experiencing displacement and other crises, will be imperative to realise the benefits outlined in this paper.

It is also crucial to recognise that social protection systems take time to fully develop, meaning a long-term strategy is required to build effective inclusive systems that can provide social protection at the scale required, and with the adaptations necessary, to serve displaced and host children and families in an effective manner. Greater involvement of international and local partners will therefore remain critical in the interim, while state system-strengthening goals are pursued.

2. Support innovative and long-term financing strategies.

The expansion of comprehensive, shock-responsive social protection for both host and displaced children and families requires

sufficient and sustained financing. This is, above all, a question of political will, and it is vital for national stakeholders to advocate for adequate budgetary allocations to inclusive and shock-responsive social protection, recognising the short- and long-term benefits that this can bring to the country. A range of options for generating this fiscal space may be available, from increasing tax and social security revenues and reallocating public expenditure, to eliminating illicit financial flows, adapting macroeconomic policy, using foreign exchange reserves, or borrowing or restructuring existing debt (ILO, 2020c). International funding also has an important role to play in supporting host countries to finance this investment, in line with international financing commitments made in the Grand Bargain, the Global Compact on Refugees and the INCAF Common Position supporting comprehensive responses in refugee situations, among others.

At the same time, it is also necessary to support the transition from short-term humanitarian financed programmes to longer-term development approaches and directly to national budgets, where feasible and appropriate. This requires innovative approaches to financing models (such as exploring non-traditional domestic source of financing, as has been the case in Sudan), developing transitional financing strategies, as well as continuing to build the evidence base on the benefits of investing in inclusive social protection across social and economic outcomes.

3. Strengthen the enabling environment for inclusive social protection – and build support for implementation.

Many of the countries discussed here have made important strides in strengthening the policy and legal environment for inclusive social protection

for displaced children and families. However, some countries have yet to provide legal entitlements to social protection (and this also varies by refugee or IDP status), and there is still a need for an improved enabling environment to support implementation in practice that will provide greater access for refugee and IDP children and families. The following key areas will be critical to advance the agenda:

- **Identify the political entry points to establish legal and regulatory rights to social protection**, including building on existing national social protection policy discussions to identify promising entry points for displaced households' inclusion. It is also important to understand the differential opportunities for refugees and IDPs. Understanding the political context and how to frame the narrative to support inclusion is vital. In Egypt, for example, identifying strategic avenues to discuss inclusive social protection for displaced populations meant building on ongoing policy discussions on informal workers' access to social protection, particularly through the social health insurance scheme. This was seen as a more viable initial route into inclusive social protection in the context of financial and coverage constraints to the provision of national social assistance.
- **Work collaboratively to deliver legal and policy commitments on paper and in practice.** Experiences from many of the countries studied, from Kenya and Ethiopia to Iraq and Jordan, illustrate the potential for national and local stakeholders to work with international partners to make progress towards inclusive social protection. Donors can support policy-level changes not only by using financing to create new opportunities but also by convening high-level policy discussions –

including renewing pledges in the run up to the Global Refugee Forum, supporting civil society advocacy and promoting dialogue to support social protection reforms and encourage a focus on the inclusion of displaced populations

In the process, it is important to work towards genuine political buy-in, through consultative processes with a diverse range of actors. Finding entry points to support public demand for social protection is essential – for example, through engagement strategies and strategic public communication – to build a system that is responsive to the needs of host and displaced alike. In Kenya, it has been important to work with both the legislative and executive arms of government to ensure the inclusion of displaced populations in the proposed Social Assistance Bill. Working with the full range of key actors is important to move beyond the technical level of the details of designing inclusive social protection systems to initiating discussions about political and financial commitment, which requires high-level political dialogue and consensus-building through collective and coordinated pressure.

- **Invest in pilots with the intention of scaling up.** Pilot initiatives can be instrumental in demonstrating the feasibility and benefits of inclusive social protection. They must also include a strategy for investments at scale and transitioning to sustainably resourced systems through shared priorities with key stakeholders designing and financing the systems. In both Lebanon and Jordan, for example, innovative pilot programmes have been initiated with specific objectives to meet the variety of needs faced by children and youth affected by displacement. Reaching host and displaced children and families, the pilots have sought to generate evidence to enhance political

commitment and government ownership in the longer term. The integration of Lebanese and non-Lebanese into a national cash transfer programme (the disability allowance) is the first of its kind.

- **Address evidence gaps.** Demonstrating the positive impacts of inclusive social protection has been an important avenue across several countries, although significant data gaps remain at global and country levels. Evidence is only just emerging on the impacts of including displaced populations in social protection programmes in the eight countries discussed here, and so advocates have found it useful to consider evidence from the impacts of humanitarian assistance on displaced populations, drawing on experience from other countries with demonstrable impacts from social protection coverage (Colombia and Brazil, for example). The increasing focus on gender- and age-specific risks and vulnerabilities captured in monitoring and evaluation is starting to provide a wider picture of what works to support these population groups within host and displaced communities too, yet overall there is still limited evidence generated from quantitative and qualitative methods, beyond narrow measurements of poverty. A more comprehensive learning agenda is needed, drawing on different types of social protection programmes and covering participatory methods including children and their families themselves, which captures a broader array of important outcomes on mental health, transitions to adulthood and gender relations, for instance.

4. Ensure that the design and implementation of inclusive social protection meets the needs of displaced children and families.

A key learning from existing provision is that adjustments are needed to existing national social protection programmes to support displaced – and also host – children and families more effectively. This can be achieved through strengthening and adapting these systems, as well as focusing on the importance of leveraging complementary programmes and services to address the needs of displaced populations comprehensively through a strengthened social policy environment. In particular:

- **Recognise and address the specific needs of children through strengthened social protection design.** Children face specific risks which are exacerbated in the context of high levels of poverty and crisis; access to health and education are disrupted and children are particularly vulnerable to protection risks such as violence, child labour or early marriage, for example. These impacts are further mediated by gender inequality and other forms of discrimination. Girls, for example, face disproportionate constraints on their time due to care and domestic responsibilities, and are at heightened risk of dropping out of secondary school and experiencing key protection concerns such as early marriage, pregnancy or gender-based violence. Social protection programmes that support families to meet their basic needs through providing adequate and regular benefits go some way to reducing these negative impacts. Programmes that deliver multiple components or are linked to other complementary programmes and services can more comprehensively tackle these challenges,

bringing about benefits for children and families in both host and displaced communities. Context-specific assessments are needed to inform programme design and support linkages to appropriate complementary programmes. For displaced children certain services may be particularly necessary, such as the provision of psychosocial support, child protection and gender-based violence services or behaviour change communication.

This also requires a more coordinated approach within the social protection sector and across the social policy environment, particularly between providers of social assistance, social insurance, labour market and social care services. It also demands an in-depth and context-specific understanding of the risks and vulnerabilities faced by particular population groups, including through the participation and engagement of children and young people in needs assessments and social protection design, effective collaboration with local organisations and youth/gender-specific civil society organisations (CSOs) with experience supporting displaced populations.

- **Invest in strengthening the operational delivery of social protection, including to overcome access barriers and data gaps** (for further guidance on this, see Lowe et al., 2022b). Social protection information systems (including social registries) often fail to include or accurately reflect the needs of displaced households, meaning the underlying data required to assess and effectively support displaced children and families is missing. Specific efforts to fill these data gaps will be needed, including through offering registration on-demand, conducting new registration drives

and – where consent has been given and data protection risks carefully mitigated – through collaboration between humanitarian and government agencies on data collection and exchange.

Programme delivery also needs to be strengthened and adapted along the delivery chain to reduce the specific barriers faced by displaced populations. This includes addressing practical constraints such as communication barriers faced by displaced populations in outreach channels, limited access to documentation (including birth registration and ID cards), and challenges to registering for and accessing payment points (including limited access to mobile payment technology such as sim cards and mobile phones). Adaptations must also address administrative complexities of portable benefits, which may be particular barriers for IDPs. Exploring options to leverage digitisation and technology to make social protection more portable and to strengthen social protection systems more broadly can also have wider benefits for the national population and state institutions, by supporting registration and enrolment, and enhancing the scale, efficiency and reach of social protection – albeit with risks of digital exclusion that must be carefully mitigated.

While the practical barriers faced by displaced populations may sometimes overlap, others may differ substantially – for example, between those living in camps and in urban-based settings; between IDPs, who may have lost national ID cards or may struggle with the portability of existing benefits, and refugees, who may face barriers completing registration processes as non-nationals; or depending on the length of displacement. Making well-considered and

appropriately tailored adjustments will not only ensure that different displaced households can effectively access provisions in practice, but may also help improve the accessibility of the system overall, playing an important role in ensuring that no one is left behind in countries' efforts to achieve social protection for all.

Finally, it should be recognised that in some cases, the needs of displaced populations relate to more complex concerns, such as issues of trust, accountability or active risks that the state poses for certain IDPs or refugees. In these cases, non-governmental agencies will need to maintain a greater role in delivery – whether entirely separately or as an independent service within the national social protection system.

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Appendix 1 Tables

Table 3 Summary of access to social protection to date for displaced populations in the countries included in the PROSPECTS partnership

Country	De jure access	De facto access
Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refugees legally eligible for social insurance and national health insurance. No official exclusion from social assistance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barred from social assistance and national health insurance in practice by ID/document requirements, cost. Restrictions on access to work and high informality prohibit access to social insurance.
Ethiopia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refugees previously excluded from social assistance, although recent refugee law expands some protections. Formally employed refugees covered by social insurance and labour laws. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internationally financed initiatives underway to include some urban refugees in UPSNP and CBHI. IDPs historically excluded from PSNP in practice by residency requirements. Restrictions on access to work and high informality prohibits access to social insurance.
Iraq	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Migration/displacement law mandates targeted assistance for IDPs and refugees. Broad rights to mainstream social protection for Palestinian refugees. Syrians poorly covered due to gaps in underlying refugee legislation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to displacement-specific assistance somewhat limited for IDPs and very limited for refugees due to fiscal and coordination constraints. IDPs and Palestinian refugees face barriers accessing social assistance but many are covered by largest national social assistance scheme (PDS). The few Syrian refugees in formal employment access social security. Syrians access internationally financed (state-supported) labour market programmes. Syrians will have partial access to state social assistance in practice through forthcoming KRI cash transfer (also for IDPs and hosts).
Jordan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refugees excluded from National Aid Fund Entitled to social security, subsidised public health insurance and certain other forms of assistance (e.g. Zakat Fund, government-supported Makani integrated service package for vulnerable children and youth) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relatively few refugees (82,000 in 2021) have work permits, so poorly covered by social security (around 4%). Refugees benefit in practice from programmes run by the state in collaboration with international partners (e.g. Makani, labour market programmes).

Country	De jure access	De facto access
Kenya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Refugees historically lacked the right to social assistance. ● Rights may change with forthcoming Social Assistance Bill. ● Eligible for social security (including for informal workers) and NHIF. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Access hindered by encampment policies. ● Refugees access some children's services and some refugees covered by NHIF (subsidised by international partners).
Lebanon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vast majority of Syrian refugees lack rights to social protection due to lacking legal residence and formal employment opportunities. ● Historically excluded from social assistance (although will be included in new disability allowance). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Refugees may access childcare, local social services and internationally financed, state-supported labour market programmes. ● No access to existing state cash transfers but will be covered by forthcoming disability allowance. ● Restrictions on access to work and high informality prohibits access to social insurance.
Sudan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Refugees entitled to public assistance, social security and NHIF in law. ● Draft National Social Protection Strategy includes refugees and IDPs as a vulnerable group. ● National Policy for IDPs reinforces IDPs' rights as citizens including to social protection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Refugees' access to social insurance and NHIF limited in practice (due to ID requirements, restrictions on formal employment, political guidance lacking, encampment policy). ● IDPs have subsidised access to NHIF, and access to social assistance improving (after historic challenges) ● Internationally funded labour market programmes being rolled out covering refugees, IDPs, hosts.
Uganda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Refugees entitled to social services and to participate in formal/informal workers' national social security fund (NSSF). ● Refugees covered in new national health insurance scheme bill. ● Poorly covered otherwise in labour law and social assistance policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Refugees included in practice in various internationally-financed (generally pilot/small-scale) social assistance and labour market programmes. ● Difficulty accessing work permits and high informality prohibits access to formal employmentbased protections. ● 6% of refugees had a household member participating in NSSF.

Source: Authors' compilation

Table 4 Legal frameworks governing refugees’ access to legal residence, free movement and formal employment (prerequisites for comprehensive access to social protection)

Country	Party to 1951 Refugees Convention and 1967 Protocol?	Party to ICESCR?	National refugee legislation
Egypt	Yes (reservations to art. 24)	Yes	No comprehensive refugee legislation. Refugees legally viewed as foreigners and required to obtain foreigner’s work permit. Palestinians legally barred from formal employment.
Ethiopia	Yes (reservations to art. 17)	Yes	2019 Refugee Proclamation accords work rights on par with other foreign workers for wage-earning or self-employment (and equal to nationals on projects funded by international community). Free movement for work, and out-of-camp residence with permits.
Iraq	No	Yes	1971 Political Refugee Law only applies to political and military refugees. No refugee legislation in the KRI governing the asylum of most Syrians. Instead, Syrians have access to temporary residency permits, which allow free movement and access to jobs in the private sector in the KRI.
Jordan	No	Yes	No comprehensive refugee legislation. ‘Jordan Compact’ established free work permits for 200,000 Syrians (but not other nationalities), enabling work in certain sectors subject to quotas. Movement restricted for the minority (18%) of registered Syrians in camps. Majority of Palestinians eligible for Jordanian citizenship and associated rights but around 200,000 from Gaza, and Palestinians recently displaced from Syria and Iraq, do not have citizenship and face restrictions accessing labour market (and other rights).
Kenya	Yes	Yes (reservation to art. 10)	Under 2006 Refugee Act, 2009 Refugee Regulations and 2021 Refugees Act, refugees can apply for free work permits and be employed in any occupation or self-employment subject to country-level regulations. Encampment policy still restricts free movement.

Country	Party to 1951 Refugees Convention and 1967 Protocol?	Party to ICESCR?	National refugee legislation
Lebanon	No	Yes	No comprehensive refugee legislation, and the vast majority of Syrians (around 80%) lack legal residence. Those registered with UNHCR as refugees are barred from working; others may gain legal migrant status through sponsorship by a Lebanese employer (but very rare). Palestinian refugees have access to formal employment by law with a work permit, but these are difficult to access in practice. Foreign labour is regulated by sector; Syrians are restricted to agriculture, construction and sanitation sectors, and Palestinians also face restrictions.
Sudan	Yes (reservations to art. 26)	Yes	2014 Asylum Act guarantees labour rights on par with other foreigners, but most (except South Sudanese, Syrian, Yemeni) require work permits that are difficult to obtain in practice. Encampment policy restricts free movement.
Uganda	Yes (reservations to art. 13 and 17)	Yes	Progressive 2006 Refugees Act guarantees free movement, and right to work on par with other foreigners (although work permits for formal employment are difficult to obtain).

Source: Authors' compilation, drawing directly on Arnold-Fernández et al. (2022).