



WITH THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF THE
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF DENMARK



**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF DENMARK**
Danida

CONFERENCE

IMPROVING LINKAGES BETWEEN SOCIAL PROTECTION AND THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT-PEACE (HDP) NEXUS IN THE ARAB REGION

NOVEMBER 06, 2024

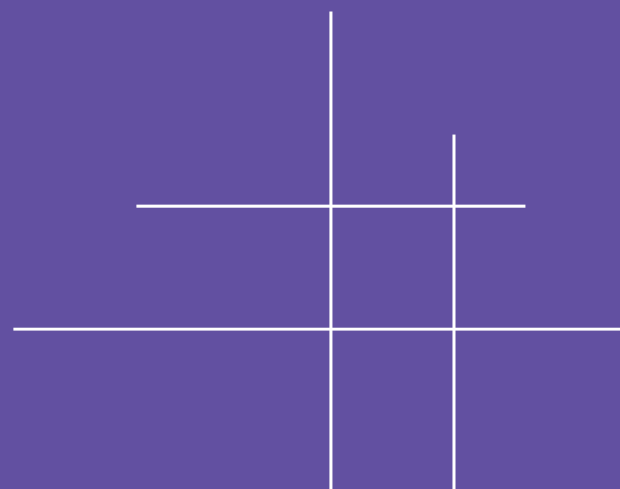
9:30 AM - 14:30 PM (Beirut Time)

HYBRID CONVENING

The Danish Refugee Council (DRC), in partnership with the Arab Reform Initiative (ARI), is organizing a conference focused on strengthening linkages between humanitarian assistance and social protection systems. Set against the backdrop of the compounded and protracted crises in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Jordan, this conference aims to address the multifaceted challenges and opportunities in creating sustainable and integrated responses. By bringing together a diverse array of stakeholders, including international and national NGOs, civil society organizations, researchers, academics, UN agencies, and representatives from the donor community, we seek to foster a collaborative environment where ideas and strategies can be shared to enhance the coordination and efficacy of aid interventions.

The core purpose of this conference is to bridge the gap between various actors involved in humanitarian and development aid responses in the region. We recognize the critical need for a holistic approach that not only addresses immediate humanitarian needs but also envisions a transition to viable social protection systems in the long run. This convergence of efforts is essential for ensuring that vulnerable populations receive comprehensive support that extends beyond immediate and reactive relief. By creating a platform where local, national, and regional civil society can influence the policies of humanitarian actors and donors, we aim to ensure that aid programs are informed by data, research, and thorough assessments of the actual needs of those affected.

This conference builds on two closed roundtable discussions, which were organized by DRC and ARI over the past year and which are part of a continual series of dialogues dedicated to exploring the intricacies of integrating humanitarian assistance and social protection systems. This conference will delve deeply into how humanitarian aid can be more social protection-oriented, how can it be more coordinated and integrated with State-led social protection schemes, and the strategies to ensure that aid recipients graduate to these schemes over time. By addressing these critical areas, we hope to develop common approaches and frameworks that can be adopted at national, regional, and international levels, ultimately contributing to the progressive realization of universal social protection.



Opening Session / 09:30-09:45

Welcoming Remarks by

TBC and TBD – Danida/ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark
Sarah Anne Rennick, Deputy Director – Arab Reform Initiative (ARI)

Panel Discussion 1 / 09:45-10:45

The HDP Nexus and Social Protection Systems in the Arab Region: What's Working and What's Not?

This panel will examine how debt burdens, austerity measures, surcharges, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s policies affect the ability of countries in the Global South, particularly the Arab region, to invest in their social protection systems. Experts will explore the impact of the various austerity measures and conditionality that the current global financial architecture entails on preventing the development of universal and sustainable social protection systems. Experts will also discuss how effective (or not) are the steps taken by the IMF to mitigate the consequences of austerity, such as imposing social spending floors and offering programs aimed at addressing income insecurity.

In this session, panelists will provide an in-depth overview of social protection and humanitarian assistance systems in the Arab region from their different perspectives. They will describe how these two systems currently operate, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of each, and emphasizing the systems' interactions with various political, economic, and social factors. Further, the session will examine any existing linkages between humanitarian assistance and social protection programs in the region, while identifying the challenges and opportunities at this intersection, and proposing key policy reforms to strengthen or conceive such linkages.

In doing so, the session will explore several critical questions: What do social protection systems in the Arab region look like today? Who do they target, what do they offer/cover, and who is included or excluded? How have these systems adapted to meet the needs of crisis-afflicted populations? Who is setting and implementing social protection policies and programs in the region?

Moderator:

Farah Al Shami, Senior Fellow and Social Protection Program Director – ARI

Panelists:

- Hania Sholkamy, Associate Professor of Anthropology – American University in Cairo (AUC)
- Wesam Qaid, Deputy Managing Director – Social Fund for Development (SFD; Yemen)
- Jamal Al-Jawahiri, Executive Director – Iraqi Al-Amal Association
- Rachel Sabates-Wheeler, Research Fellow – Institute of Development Studies

Panel Discussion 2 / 10:45-11:45

International Actors' Consideration of the Social Protection Pillars: Magnitude and Impact-Assessment

This session will tap into the extent to which international actors have integrated the four pillars of social protection (social services, social assistance, social insurance, and social promotion) in the designing and implementation of their interventions. Panelists will share insights on where, when, and how these pillars were considered in humanitarian programming, the links that international actors sought to establish with social protection systems, and the timeliness of their actions. When reflecting on the timeliness of integrating social protection pillars in their approach, international actors will highlight the importance that early integration can have in influencing their ability to effectively engage with social protection systems and improving results for target populations.

This session will consider the following questions: Do international actors have a coordinated vision and response, and what are the reasons behind any lack of coordination? How are these actors ensuring that humanitarian interventions contribute to building shock-resilient and responsive social protection systems in the medium to long term? How is foreign aid affected by socio-political and politico-economic challenges in Arab countries? How are donors assessing the grievances and demands of aid recipients, ensuring that their programs are designed to cater to the needs of the hardest-hit and most vulnerable populations?

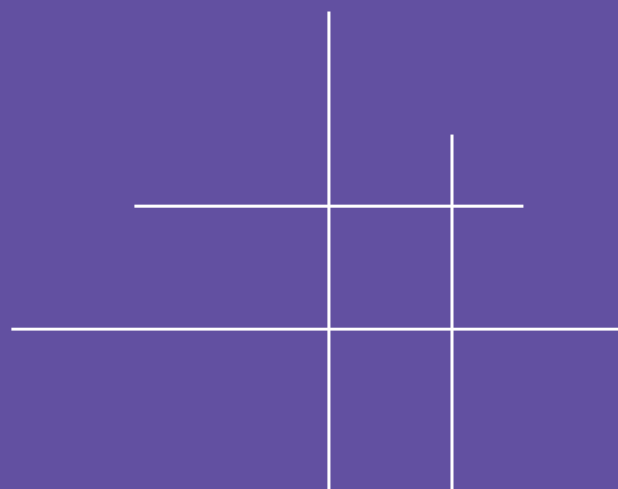
Moderator:

Justine Cherrier, Regional Economic Recovery Coordinator – DRC

Panelists:

- Nour Shawaf, Humanitarian Policy and Advocacy Advisor – Oxfam-MENA
- Marco Schaefer, Chief of Social Protection Section – UN-ESCWA
- Joe Elias Mekhael, Chief of Party – DRC
- Haneen Sayed, Human Development Specialist, Formerly World Bank

Break / 11:45-12:15



Panel Discussion 3 / 12:15-13:15

Access and Effectiveness of Social Protection Systems for Marginalized and Vulnerable Groups

This session will focus on how vulnerable and marginalized groups, such as women, youth, displaced persons, including refugees, and people with disabilities, access social protection programs and how effective these programs are from their perspectives. Speakers will provide insights into the deficiencies and areas for improvement, ensuring that the specific needs of these population groups are not overlooked in our efforts. The discussion will delve into the various factors hindering inclusion, such as political redlines, psychosocial factors, governance issues, problems of digital and financial literacy and inclusion, financial constraints, and issues of trust in public systems, etc. By addressing these challenges, the session aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the effectiveness of social protection systems for these groups and identify actionable steps for reform.

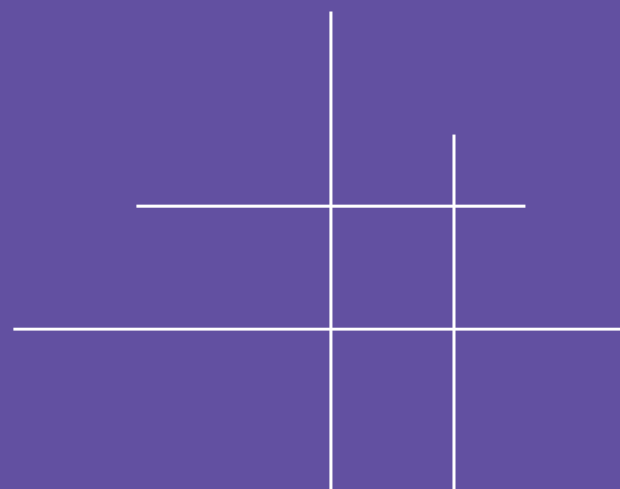
Accordingly, the session will address several critical questions: What feedback exists from eligible recipients on how they engage with State-led social protection programs? How do beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance perceive these programs in terms of adequacy, coverage, timeliness, and effectiveness? Why might some individuals exclude themselves from national social protection systems and refuse to transition from humanitarian programs? What are the barriers to access in cases of subjected-to exclusion?

Moderator:

Diala Ahwach, Program Coordinator – ARI

Panelists:

- Zeina Mohanna, Strategic Planning and Head of Human Rights Department – Amel Association International
- Khaled Jomaa, Researcher – Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD)
- Francesco Tisei, Senior Social Protection Officer – UNHCR-MENA
- Annette Savoca, Cash and Humanitarian Advisor at the Relief and Development Department – People in Need



Panel Discussion 4 / 13:15-14:15

Breaking Down Silos: How Can Better Articulation of the Social Protection Pillars Improve Results?

This panel will revolve around the impact that large-scale aid to most Arab countries has had on social protection systems, building on the first two sessions. Panelists will explore how interventions often focus on one social protection pillar at a time and how rather embedding a holistic approach across all four pillars can strengthen these systems and make them more inclusive and sustainable. The latter approach aligns with the demands of civil society in the region and aims to ensure universal, comprehensive, and effective support, including for vulnerable populations.

This discussion will be forward-looking and will focus on the needed steps for foreign aid to have a positive impact on social protection systems across their four pillars. It will also examine the coordination needed among humanitarian organizations and donors to support a seamless transition for beneficiaries from humanitarian assistance to governmental social protection schemes. As such, the session will showcase how coordinated, multi-pillar strategies can lead to more shock-responsive/resilient social protection systems in the region.

Moderator:

TBD – DRC

Panelists:

- Jean-Christophe Carret, Country Director for the Middle East Department – World Bank
- Marie-Noelle Abi Yaghi, Co-director – Center for Social Sciences Research and Action (CeSSRA)
- Quentin Le Gallo, Regional Thematic Expert on Food Security, Cash Transfers, and Basic Needs – ECHO
- Ziad Abdel Samad, Executive Director – Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND)

Closing Remarks:

What Are the Key Takeaways and Policy Recommendations?

Working Together: What Is the Role of Those in the Room?

- Justine Cherrier, Regional Economic Recovery Coordinator – DRC
- Farah Al Shami, Senior Fellow and Social Protection Program Director – ARI