

Global Fund for Social Protection

Red Cross and Red Crescent Cash and Social Protection Technical Working Group Feedback

Date: 01/12/2020

The following document presents feedback from the members of the Red Cross and Red Crescent's Cash and Social Protection Technical Working Group (TWG) in response to the [Call for reactions: Proposal for a Global Fund for Social Protection](#). This document's contents represent the position of the members of the TWG and are provided in order to offer constructive feedback on the proposal for a GFSP. Under no circumstances should the contents of this document be viewed or used in such a way as to be presented as the formal position of the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement on the topic discussed.

Introduction

First and foremost, the Red Cross and Red Crescent's Cash and Social Protection Technical Working Group (TWG) welcomes the continuing efforts to promote the creation of a Global Fund for Social Protection (GFSP). The UN Special Rapporteur's recent [op-ed](#) on this topic and report '[Looking back to look ahead: A rights-based approach to social protection in the post-COVID-19 economic recovery](#)', both present a compelling argument for the need for a dedicated Fund, tasked with providing sufficient and sustainable financing to ensure social protection floors for all. It is especially encouraging to see the emphasis placed on the role of a future GFSP in ensuring quality and accountability, as well as facilitating coverage for especially vulnerable and often excluded groups such as migrants, those living in states of poverty and affected by situations of crises, disasters and conflict.

Indeed, the challenges of ensuring quality, improved accountability mechanisms and universal coverage were, and continue to be, the central elements of the investment case for the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria. It is the TWG's belief that the UN Special Rapporteur will do well to emphasize these similarities to the 47th session of the Human Rights Council, along with the related points outlined within this document, which we hope will be of use in the development of the session's report.

Civil society – an important piece of the puzzle

Recognising that the state carries the ultimate responsibility for providing social protection floors to those under their care, the TWG would echo [statements made by others](#) on the value, and indeed arguable necessity, of the supporting role of civil society in their design, implementation and evaluation. Whilst it is not possible to cover in detail the perceived role and contribution of civil society in the delivery of a future GFSP in this document, and we are sure of the UN Special Rapporteur's knowledge on this topic, the following [Civil society guide to national protection floors](#) and complimentary academic pieces¹² may be of use to readers.

¹ Vaes, Sarah & Van Ongevalle, Jan & Fonteneau, Bénédicte. (2017). Civil society's contributions to strong social protection. The role of civil society organisations in developing and maintaining strong national social protection systems, available [here](#).

² Hevia, Felipe J. (2014). The Role that Civil Society can Play in Ensuring Accountability in Social Protection Programmes, available [here](#).

In short, civil society actors are able to advocate for the legal and institutional frameworks required for government authorities to meet their obligations concerning social protection, ensuring that instruments promote equality and non-discrimination, as well as transparency, public participation and overall accountability in their design and evaluation. Civil society are also able to provide invaluable contributions to the delivery of social protection instruments, improving their reach, accessibility and efficiency. For example, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement³, collectively in 2017 and 2018, reached 9.22 million people with CHF1.53 billion direct cash assistance to support basic needs and longer-term recovery from crisis across 100 countries. A significant proportion of these 100 countries were fragile states, affected by conflict, disasters and situations of poverty. These settings are characterised by inequality, vulnerability and deprivation, where social protection floors are non-existent or those that do exist may be unable to reach inaccessible or excluded communities.

The TWG therefore agrees with the points raised by the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors in their [call for a GFSP](#), noting the important role that civil society must play in contributing to the “full participation of people of all ages, including women, people with disabilities, minorities, and those living in poverty in the design, implementation and monitoring” of social protection schemes. It is the TWG’s hope that the contributory role of civil society, including National Red Cross Red Crescent Societies in their legally mandated role as auxiliary to public authorities, is appropriately reflected in the GFSP report to the Human Rights Council. Furthermore, it is the TWG’s belief that the proposal for a GFSP would be considerably strengthened if the inclusion of delivering on the concept of [localisation](#) - which is a core commitment of the Grand Bargain and Common Donor Approach – remains central to the Fund’s investment case.

Governance and quality assurance - lessons from the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria and the GAVI CSO Constituency

It is encouraging that the Call for reactions included an explicit request for feedback concerning lessons that can be drawn from the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria. As a key partner of the Global Fund, the IFRC Network has worked closely with counterparts on governance processes, as well as hosting the [Alliance for Malaria Prevention](#), which partners with the Fund on monitoring and quality assurance of implementation at the country level. The IFRC, National Red Cross Red Crescent Societies and a number of (I)NGOs have also acted as Principle Recipients and/or Sub-recipients of Global Fund money, notably in humanitarian contexts such as the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Readers should note that the Global Fund continues to place significant importance on its work in what it calls ‘Challenging Operating Environments’, even developing a specific [COE policy](#) in 2016, noting that these settings are “critical to the Global Fund mission and objectives”, and require “blending development and humanitarian approaches”. It is the TWG’s belief that a GFSP will only be successful - especially in regard to any objective focused on universality - by adopting a similar approach to COEs which recognises the necessity for linkages between humanitarian and development approaches⁴, and therefore the importance of close collaboration with humanitarian partners. In this regard, the ongoing work of the Global Fund on issues related to risk management and overcoming the challenges faced in working in these ‘last-mile’ settings, often with civil society/(I)NGOs as implementing partners, should be of notable interest to the UN Special Rapporteur.

³ Readers will note that the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement consists of three elements – The International Committee of the Red Cross; The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; and the 192 member National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

⁴ The UN Special Rapporteur is encouraged to consult the growing literature on the ‘humanitarian-development nexus’, which continues to be promoted as a [new way of working towards collective outcomes](#), building on the comparative advantage of a diverse range of partners

Particular attention should be paid to the extensive literature outlining lessons learned from the Global Fund's [implementing partner model](#), and in particular, the [Country Coordinating Mechanism \(CCM\)](#) including the recent [CCM Evolution Strategic Initiative](#) tasked with improving the approach and methodology of country level coordination and implementation. The TWG would therefore recommend that, if not already done so, the UN Special Rapporteur engages directly with the Global Fund on these critical issues.

With regards to a proposed governance structure of a future GFSP, a notable example of an effective governance mechanism which ensures civil society voices are heard and their expertise can be capitalised upon, is the GAVI Civil Society Organisation Constituency (GAVI CSO)⁵. The GAVI CSO is a collection of over 4000 partner CSOs involved in immunisation implementation, advocacy and, in their own words, acting as a watchdog to ensure that government and international actors are accountable to the people and communities they serve. The GAVI CSO consists of a Steering Committee made up of 19 CSOs from 15 countries, who collectively, hold a dedicated seat on the GAVI Board, where they promote the principles of accountability, transparency and participation into all aspects of GAVI's global work. Please see [here](#) for more details on the GAVI CSO.

The GAVI CSO is just one example of a dedicated initiative that attempts to ensure civil society organisations are included in relevant decision-making processes of a large international entity. It may be prudent for any future GFSP to include a similar initiative, with the key lesson being that CSO participation in the governance structures of international organisations must be by purposeful design, and not simply done in an ad hoc manner.

Climate, crisis and conflict – accounting for humanitarian settings and ensuring the linkage with cash and voucher assistance

Any objective which is inherently universal in terms of its intended outcome, will benefit from the contribution of principled humanitarian action in many contexts. Indeed, in settings affected by conflict and crises, the contribution of independent, neutral and impartial actors is often indispensable in addressing unmet need, and in so doing, arguably providing the equivalent of a last resort social protection floor. The expectation that a future GFSP will consist of a facility branch to close the funding shortfall for social protection floors, as well as a reinsurance branch to address the risks of excess demand triggered by major shocks and crises is a welcomed proposal. However, it will be important that both branches are designed and implemented in such a way as to link effectively with humanitarian actors that benefit from access to certain populations that remain inaccessible to the Fund's implementing partners and especially government authorities. Investing in actors and systems that can contribute to extend the reach of social protection schemes and fill gaps where appropriate through CVA for example, will be a key challenge for a future GFSP. The lessons learned from both the Global Fund and GAVI with their focus on 'Last mile settings/COEs' and prioritisation of '[zero-dose children](#)' campaigns respectively, highlight why ensuring linkages with the humanitarian sector in these settings should be a critical element of a GFSP from the start. Indeed to this end, should the opportunity arise and be of benefit to the UN Special Rapporteur, the TWG would welcome the opportunity to share the Red Cross and Red Crescent's growing experience in contributing and linking to shock responsive social protection, [climate smart](#) and Early Warning Early Action initiatives, [Forecast-based financing](#) and risk communication and community engagement [approaches](#), amongst others.

The GFSP as a catalyst for improvements across the humanitarian and development sector

The expected scale of operations of a GFSP would offer substantial opportunities to explore sustainable solutions with regards to the procurement of financial services, both within countries, but

⁵ For full transparency, the GAVI CSO Constituency is a programme funded by GAVI and hosted by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

also potentially sub-regionally (for example, in situations where the regular movement of people across international borders may be an important element of a social protection scheme). The economies of scale of a GFSP and the expected data and financial systems that would need to be built and maintained in order to meet the Fund's demand and corresponding increased state investment in social protection, stand to have significant positive consequences for the wider humanitarian and development sector as a whole.

It is therefore crucial that any future GFSP recognises the importance of its role to facilitate and/or contribute to the building of these financial systems, as well as the Fund's capacity to potentially overcome many of the challenges humanitarian and development actors have faced working on cash and voucher assistance (i.e. challenges concerning registration, improved inclusion rates - especially regarding marginalised groups, infrastructure for data management and data protection, quality, cash preparedness capacity (technical and policy) and the resilience and sustainability of financial systems following disasters and crises, amongst others). It is also important that any future GFSP recognises and capitalises on its competitive advantage to pilot and implement innovative solutions as well as partner with the private sector to reduce costs and improve efficiency. Nevertheless, the TWG would strongly encourage that such systems and financial architecture are, as far as possible, developed under the ethos of being 'open source' public goods, and therefore, usable by other actors within the wider humanitarian and development sector.

The UN Special Rapporteur may therefore wish to include language within the report to the Human Rights Council outlining a number of expected positive externalities that may arise from the creation of a GFSP, with particular emphasis on those that will benefit States as well as the wider humanitarian and development sector, including local organisations.

Closing

Finally, the TWG would like to take this opportunity to commend the UN Special Rapporteur's commitment to ensuring an open and engaging consultation process for the development of the GFSP report to the Human Rights Council. Should there be further opportunities to provide feedback on drafts of the report or engage in an open dialogue on this or related topics, the TWG would look forward to doing so.

Please address any questions or requests for clarification on any of the topics discussed in this document to the following contacts:

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