

Social Protection and Food and Nutrition Security in MENA

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Introduction

- Achieving food and nutrition security (FNS) constitutes a major challenge in MENA
- Several structural challenges related to FNS
 - ✓ Key drivers – poverty, inequality, demography, urbanization
 - ✓ Natural resource stress, fragile ecosystems, resource and water scarcity, climate change etc. are adding more woes to the countries
 - ✓ High import dependency and exposure to global food, price and fuel crises
 - ✓ Only region globally where chronic malnutrition is rising
 - ✓ Micronutrient deficiency is also high
- Of recent, instability, conflicts, displacements

Social Protection in Development Context in MENA

- Social protection and safety nets help protecting the most vulnerable from some of these structural challenges.
- Longstanding MENA engagement in SP/SN
- Generally, food and fuel subsidies are the most common forms of safety nets
- Close to 220 million people access food subsidies in MENA
- These subsidies benefit the poor (and the rich), however their sustainability is at risk due to shrinking fiscal space

Social Protection in Development Context in MENA

- WFP is studying SP systems and services in MENA from a food security perspective jointly with IDS-Sussex. Our research examines existing formal and informal safety nets looking at strengths, gaps and opportunities
- More pragmatically, WFP is working with national governments and other actors to provide technical capacity building support on food security focused safety nets
 - ✓ *Strengthening PDS in Iraq and Libya*
 - ✓ *Food Voucher (including e-Voucher) based safety nets (ie Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt)*
 - ✓ *Including food security parameters in SN household targeting methodology (ie, Palestine)*
 - ✓ *Strengthening national school feeding (ie, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan)*



Social Protection in Development Context in MENA

- Enhancing systems and services

Many countries have limited capacities to anticipate price spikes, assess impact and provide targeted support through social protection and safety net mechanisms.

WFP and IFPRI are developing a Safety Nets Alert Platform - an agile regional food price monitoring system that can enhance food security early warning, risk management and social protection particularly in relation to food prices and economic shocks



Social Protection in Humanitarian Context in MENA

- Since 2011 Arab Spring, there is a new dimension of vulnerability in MENA as a result of massive displacements
- This has opened the discourse on looking beyond the traditional role social protection and safety nets – also addressing the needs of local communities, IDPs and refugees in critical circumstances
- WFP, being one of the major humanitarian actors in this region, is providing humanitarian safety nets to more than 25 million IDPs, refugees and local population through a range of interventions, including
 - ✓ Very large cash/voucher based emergency safety nets
 - ✓ 3.5 million children through school feeding
 - ✓ 2 million children and pregnant and lactating women through nutrition interventions



Looking ahead

- SP/SN are crucial to the development discourse in the MENA region
- We need to think of two, interlinked streams: strengthening national social protection systems; and
- Creating scalable safety nets that expands and contracts in response to emergencies and during and after any crises to protect lives and livelihoods of vulnerable people
- WFP is working on bringing necessary knowledge and evidence for the MENA region to expanding the scope of social protection and FS safety nets

Looking ahead

- More analytical work is required on social protection and safety - context analysis, targeting, setting standards, selecting appropriate modalities etc.
- SN and SP can be linked to mid-term resilience building objectives.
- Planning for a food secure MENA built on principles of social cohesion, inclusion and solidarity also means sharing a vision of social protection and predictable social assistance for resilience livelihoods
 - ✓ Syria school feeding – as a part of Lost Generation campaign
 - ✓ Resilience building for displaced and refugees

Many thanks!

