

Practitioner Note 1: Inclusive targeting, identification and registration in social protection¹

Maya Hammad, International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG)

The strength of social protection systems in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and their ability to respond to shocks vary significantly from one country to the next, with some countries suffering from limited financing, inadequate coverage and a lack of coordination and digitised infrastructure. Generally, there was low social protection coverage prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and considerable gaps in the social policy infrastructure of MENA countries to properly address the needs of the most vulnerable groups, particularly refugees, internally displaced persons, irregular migrants and female foreign workers. Furthermore, as only a few countries in the region have developed single registries in the past decade, their use in identifying beneficiaries during the COVID response was lower in the MENA region than in any other region in the Global South (Hammad, Bacil and Soares 2021).

Considering this context, and the need to strengthen social protection systems generally and make them more shock-responsive and more inclusive of vulnerable and marginalised groups, the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG), in partnership with the UNICEF MENA Regional Office, developed a Practitioner Note (Hammad 2022) on inclusive targeting, identification and registration mechanisms in shock-responsive social protection. This is the first Practitioner Note in a series on shock-responsive social protection developed by the two agencies which gathers examples of best practices on inclusive:

- targeting, identification and registration;
- transfer value, type and payment modality;
- communication, case management and accountability; and
- social protection for forcibly displaced populations.

The first note provides five best practices identified from existing literature and the practices of MENA countries in targeting, identification and registration. Next, it presents immediate and long-term recommendations for enhancing the inclusiveness of those best practices, along with illustrative country cases. Both government and humanitarian initiatives were considered. The five best practices and two of the main recommendations for how to achieve them are presented below. For country cases illustrating the different recommendations, please refer to the full Practitioner Note.

Best Practice 1: Adjust eligibility criteria, reorganise prioritised categories based on context and/or simplify verification mechanisms

- Waive the requirement for valid identification documents and accept expired documents.

- Prepare standard operating procedures/tools for adapting existing programmes' eligibility criteria based on the type of crisis.

Best Practice 2: Use social registries and existing beneficiary databases for beneficiary identification

- Invest in the expansion of social registry coverage and improve the relevance and currency of data included.

Best Practice 3: Use alternative databases for beneficiary identification

- Activate identification and registration of informal workers through government databases such as a health insurance beneficiary database or non-governmental databases such as informal workers' associations' databases.

Best Practice 4: Set up digital registration systems or use existing ones (including online platforms and mobile applications)

- Complement digital registration with SMS/Whatsapp registration and non-digital options such as helplines and in-person registration.
- Make SMS registration free, to include those living in extreme poverty.

Best Practice 5: Engage local actors in beneficiary identification and registration

- Strengthen capacities of local actors responsible for registration/identification.
- Include a localisation component in the shock-responsive social protection strategy that ensures local actors' involvement in both decision-making and implementation.

References:

Hammad, Maya. 2022. "Practitioner Note 1: Inclusive Targeting, Identification and Registration." *Research Report No. 67*. Brasilia and Amman: International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth and United Nations Children's Fund Middle East and North Africa Regional Office.

Hammad, Maya, Fabianna Bacil and Fábio Veras Soares. 2021. "Next Practices—Innovations in the COVID-19 Social Protection Responses and Beyond." *Research Report No. 60*. New York and Brasilia: United Nations Development Programme and International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth. <<https://bit.ly/3GpjerO>>. Accessed 8 December 2021.

Note:

1. The full list of references is available in the full study. The other notes of the series can be found at: <<https://www.ipcig.org/publications>>.