

# Jordan: Design, implementation and child-sensitivity of social protection responses to COVID-19<sup>1</sup>

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**This One Pager is part of a series based** on the report 'Social protection responses to COVID-19 in MENA: Design, implementation and child-sensitivity', developed in partnership by the IPC-IG and UNICEF MENARO (Bilo, Dytz, and Sato 2022). The study reviewed the design and implementation features of the social assistance measures implemented in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region up to the end of March 2021, and the extent to which they took children's needs and vulnerabilities into account

Similar to most countries in the MENA region, Jordan's real gross domestic product (GDP) suffered a 5 per cent decrease in 2020 (International Monetary Fund 2020), which directly translated into household income losses. The proportion of households receiving a monthly income of less than JOD100 (USD141)<sup>2</sup> increased from 6 per cent before the COVID-19 crisis to 12 per cent of the total population in 2020 (UNICEF 2020). This situation was compounded by the fact that Jordan hosts a large refugee population.

Up to the end of March 2021, the IPC-IG mapping of social protection responses to COVID-19 in the Global South<sup>3</sup> identified 25 social protection responses in Jordan (12 social assistance, 10 labour market and 3 social insurance responses). The government set up an extra-budgetary fund (the *Himmat Watan* Fund) which allowed the establishment and expansion of some existing programmes through donations. Among these was the *Takaful* programme, a conditional cash transfer for vulnerable households. The programme was expanded horizontally twice, with a total of 410,000 new households included up to February 2021. *Takaful* was also expanded vertically, with beneficiaries receiving between JOD50 (USD70.50) and JOD136 (USD191.80) depending on household size. Jordan's National Aid Fund also increased its existing cash transfer from JOD50 to JOD200 (USD70.50 to USD282), depending on the number of household members, for 10,625 additional households. The programme existed before the pandemic and is worth highlighting due to its child-sensitive features: while it targets orphans and vulnerable families, the benefit increases with household size and has conditionalities related to school attendance and vaccination.

Eight out of nine government-provided social assistance responses that were analysed under the scope of the assessment developed by IPC-IG and UNICEF MENARO—cash, in-kind and school feeding programmes—were considered child-sensitive. This means they had one or more of the following features: per capita transfer values, children as a target group, and explicit linkages to health, education, nutrition or child protection services.

Another 13 cash and in-kind social protection responses offered by UNICEF, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) were identified in Jordan.<sup>4</sup> One of the main populations targeted by these humanitarian

responses were refugees. Eight of the humanitarian responses were assessed as child-sensitive. UNICEF, for example, provided materials for e-learning, as schools were closed, and expanded its *Hajati* cash transfer programme with the assistance of UNHCR to an additional 18,208 children. *Hajati* specifically targets children, with parents encouraged to use it as a way to support children's schooling (while being an unconditional transfer).

Based on the analysis of the social assistance responses to COVID-19, some of the key lessons learned for Jordan in terms of shock-responsive and child-sensitive social protection are the following.

- Jordan's *Takaful* transfers are based on households size. However, the fact that the benefit value is capped at three household members does not consider the average household size of 4.7, and the fact that poorer households tend to be larger.
- The strength of Jordan's existing social protection system, in addition to the existence of a disaster risk management strategy and the introduction of coordinating bodies for the response very early on in the pandemic, assisted with the timeliness of the response: actors and institutions were able to communicate and use existing systems to rapidly provide shock-responsive social protection to vulnerable households.
- Following this, the existing databases (National Unified Registry, National Aid Fund) allowed for quicker expansion and better coverage of Jordan's population.
- The coordination between humanitarian actors and the institutional response ensured better coverage of the population through combined and complementary responses, reaching particularly vulnerable populations (such as refugees).

#### References:

Bilo, C., J.P. Dytz, and L. Sato. 2022. "Social protection responses to COVID-19 in MENA: Design, implementation and child-sensitivity". *Research Report*, No. 76. Brasília and Amman: International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth and United Nations Children's Fund Middle East and North Africa Regional Office.

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UNICEF. 2020. *Socio-Economic Assessment of Children and Youth in the time of COVID-19 Jordan: How COVID-19 has affected vulnerable households in Jordan*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund. <<https://www.unicef.org/jordan/reports/socio-economic-assessment-children-and-youth-time-covid-19-jordan>>. Accessed 14 July 2022.

#### Notes:

1. For the full list of references and a description of all social assistance measures mapped, see the full study.
2. All values in US dollars at the exchange rate of 6 April 2022.
3. See: <<https://socialprotection.org/social-protection-responses-covid-19-global-south>>.
4. Only cash, in-kind and school feeding measures led by UNICEF, UNRWA, the International Organization for Migration, UNHCR or WFP were considered in the scope of the study.

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