

UNICEF STATE OF PALESTINE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERNATIONAL CONSULTANT

Title	Assessing the shock responsive readiness of the social protection system
Location	State of Palestine - Jerusalem
Reporting to	Chief of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
Duration	27 working days

I. PART ONE – External

BACKGROUND

The State of Palestine (SoP) has been plagued by a complex political crisis, characterized by over 53¹ years of Israeli occupation and 13 years of ongoing blockade which has exacerbated the structural needs and worsened the socio-economic conditions of the population. The State of Palestine is exposed to a broad range of covariate shocks due to the recurrent and sporadic escalations of violence and conflict, as well as the harmful consequences of climate change. The combination of poverty, and a weak economy faced in SoP contribute to increasing the humanitarian needs and vulnerabilities.

As an example of the shocks faced in the State of Palestine, since 2007 the closure of the Gaza Strip has tremendously increased poverty and unemployment. In 2020², Gaza witnessed one of the worst economic performances globally and the world's highest unemployment rate³ with more than half of its population living below the poverty line. More than one million children have limited access to essential services and at least 500,000 children have restricted access to safe and clean drinking water⁴. This was compounded by the conflict escalation in the Gaza Strip in May 2021.

Within this context the Palestinian Authority, thanks to financial support from various donors (including the World Bank and European Union), is implementing under the leadership of the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme (NCTP) as a national social safety net. Other cash actors are implementing complementary programmes such as UNRWA, WFP, UNICEF and international NGOs, to support the most vulnerable households to meet their basic needs. Across the SoP, the NCTP targets over 100,000 households living in deep poverty with quarterly cash transfers, however these payments have been irregular since 2018. The Palestinian NCTP is a social-protection scheme that is considered to be effective in targeting the poor, most marginalized and hardest to reach in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Despite the dire economic consequences of COVID-19 on the poorest families, the NCTP recipients have received only one quarterly payment in 2021 (as of October 2021). In addition to the lack of financial resources, the Palestine social protection system has technical gaps to be shock responsive. This creates constraints that prevent upholding of the rights of shock affected populations in times of crisis.

UNICEF recognizes that Cash Transfer Programming⁵ is a cost-effective and an efficient means for providing humanitarian assistance, while contributing to empowering affected populations, compared to traditional in-kind assistance. As such, in 2016 UNICEF and other

¹ Background: The Israeli Occupation | Amnesty International

² United Nations, "Gaza in 2020: A liveable place", August 2012.

³ International Labour Office (ILO), The Situation of Workers of the Occupied Arab Territories, ILC.107/DG/APP (Geneva, 2018).

⁴ UNICEF (2020), <https://www.unicef.org/documents/state-palestine-humanitarian-situation-report-end-year-2020>

⁵ Including vouchers

actors agreed major collective commitments with the aim of increasing the scale, volume and quality of humanitarian cash transfers (HCT). Within this context UNICEF committed to increasing the use of cash transfers in emergencies in ways that build on and contribute to strengthening the social protection systems.

There is growing evidence to indicate that strengthening the ‘shock responsiveness’ of social protection systems, in particular social transfer programmes, contributes to the key purpose of social protection, that is to support people when they need it the most. Shock responsiveness also contributes to building the resilience of individuals, households, communities and systems. Shock-Responsive Social Protection systems increase partners’ capacity to support children and their families in different risk contexts and contribute to maintaining children’s human capital development regardless of the type and duration of the crisis they may be facing.

In line with UNICEF’s strategic objective to support national government partners to develop and strengthen social protection systems to address needs in crisis contexts, the UNICEF State of Palestine Country Office (CO) has been working closely with the Ministry of Social Development (MOSD) over the programme cycle to support the strengthening of the national social protection system. In 2020 as part of the response to the devastating socio-economic consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the CO initiated a cash transfer pilot as a top-up on the National Cash Transfer Program (NCTP) which supported 687 vulnerable households who were severely affected by this shock. This experience highlighted the limitations of the social protection system to respond to humanitarian needs in an efficient and effective manner and the need to enhance the risk informed components of the system to enhance its responsiveness to shocks. More recently UNICEF’s humanitarian response in Gaza in May 2021 further reinforced the need to invest in strengthening the shock responsiveness of the social protection system in Palestine. To this end, UNICEF plans to embark on a process to assess the readiness of the existing social protection system in order to develop and operationalize a capacity building plan to better guide efforts to risk inform and strengthen the shock responsiveness of the national social protection system.

PURPOSE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The purposes of this consultancy are to:

- 1- Lead a consultative process to develop a shock responsive social protection capacity building plan, focusing on the four dimensions of UNICEF social protection systems’ framework (*see points 2-5 in figure 1*) and clearly outlining the role of the key stakeholders, including UNICEF. The process must include the following:
 - Assess the political, technical, operational and financial feasibility, or ‘readiness’, of the National Cash Transfer Program (NCTP) to maintain and scale up cash assistance to people affected by the covariate shocks (including escalation of violence and conflicts and climate change).
 - Develop a capacity building plan for the integration of Shock Responsive Social Protection into the NCTP, through mapping and comparison of (appropriate and feasible) options for social protection responses to an escalation of violence or conflicts across the State of Palestine.
 - Identify opportunities and challenges for developing or supporting a ‘cash plus’ approach⁶ in the social cash transfer programming to better impact on children in emergency contexts.

⁶ Complementary programming where cash transfer programmes (conditional or unconditional) are combined with other modalities or activities. UNICEF uses this approach and terminology to refer to one-off or regular cash grants that link with complementary services and/or activities. Examples include unrestricted cash grants linked to school attendance or to referrals to specific services.

- Based on various social protection initiatives ongoing, identify gaps and opportunities for synergy and complementarity to better support the national social system strengthening.
- 2- Assess the capacity, or 'readiness' of the UNICEF CO to provide technical and operational support to relevant government authorities to design and implement cash transfer programmes in response to future crises.

MAIN TASKS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED

Final Deliverables

- Report of the Shock Responsive Social Protection Readiness Assessment, including the completed questionnaire.
- Shock Responsive Social Protection Readiness Assessment capacity building plan.

Given that this work is to serve the capacity development of the national system, these deliverables will be required to be translated into Arabic following the work undertaken by the consultant, for consultation with national stakeholders. The translation will be undertaken by the Country Office and not the consultant. As such Arabic is a distinct advantage to undertake this work.

Process

Weekly debrief on work progress with the key findings, challenges, and bottlenecks to the supervisor.

- Timely delivery of draft and final report according to the schedule agreed upon in the format provided in the user guide.
- A PPT summarizing the assessment process, findings, and the proposed capacity building plan.
- Based upon on the key findings a national shock responsiveness capacity plan is developed with an estimated budget.
- Key results and recommendations of the assessment are presented to the government and social protection actors to secure stakeholder's buy-in.

Satisfactory quality of the final report.

METHODOLOGY AND DELIVERABLES

UNICEF has developed a process-oriented tool to assess the readiness of social protection systems. This tool has been piloted and utilized in close to 10 countries to develop plans to strengthen shock responsiveness of social protection systems. This tool comprises six modules aligned with the four components of the social protection system and two additional modules which aim respectively to support the assessment of the context and UNICEF's internal preparedness (ref: Figure 1 - components 1 and 6).

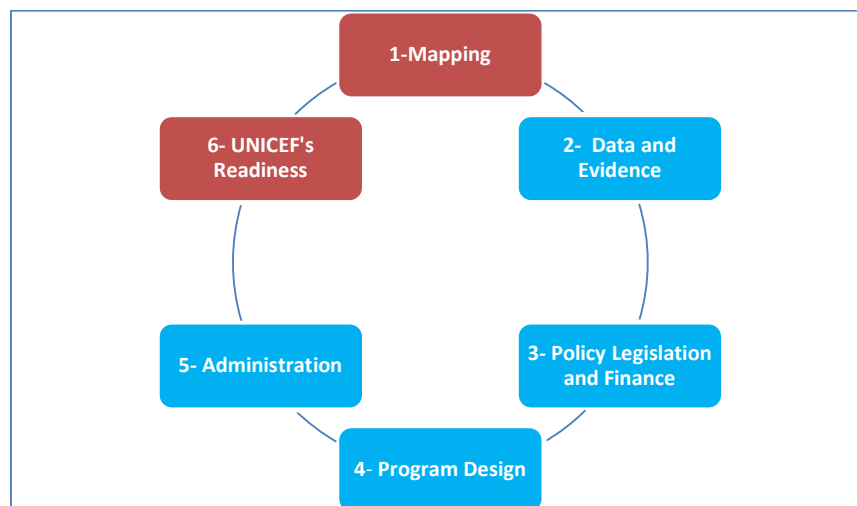


Figure 1: Components of the social protection readiness tool

For this assignment the consultant/s are expected to follow the methodology outlined in the accompanying guidance to apply the tool that includes following four interlinked steps highlighted in the figure 1 above (component 2-5). The user guide for the Social Protection System Readiness Assessment tool will be provided to the consultant at the inception stage of this assignment. In general, this assessment is intended to be a relatively light touch exercise and a rapid appraisal of the current situation, combining secondary data and insights from key informants and the UNICEF experience in the country. Where possible, secondary data and existing knowledge from the UNICEF team and other key stakeholders should be used, with key informant interviews prioritized in order to fill gaps. See the different steps in Figure 2 below.

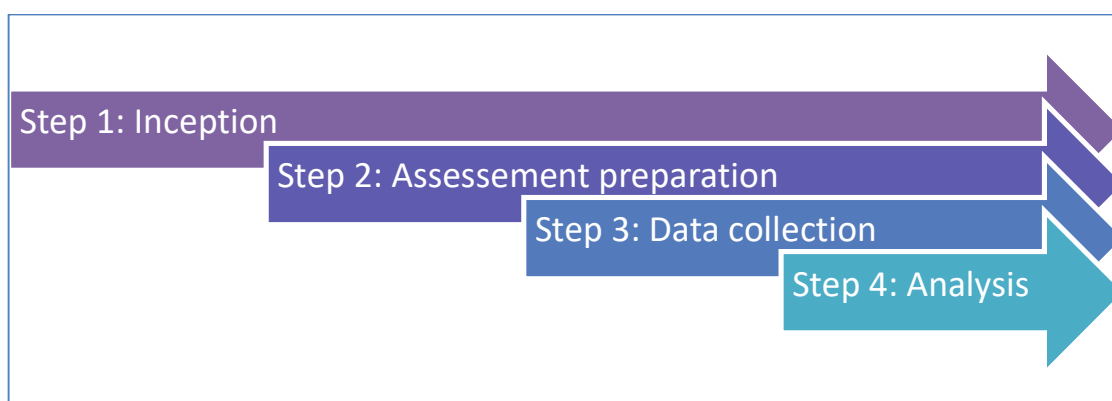


Figure 2: Key steps of the assessment process

Deliverables and timelines:

In consultation with the Chief of Social Policy/Social Protection Specialist in Palestine, the consultant is expected to undertake the following tasks and activities to complete the assignment. A proposed breakdown of the assignment in number of days is presented below. It is estimated that the entire assessment will be completed in 27 working days.

	Activity	Deliverables	Timeframe
1.	Inception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Familiarization with the SP system readiness assessment tool Preliminary discussions with key UNICEF staff to understand the scope of the assignment <p>Development of an assessment plan and submission of the inception report</p>	2 days
2.	Assessment preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customization of the assessment tool (assign responsibilities for data collection, identify data sources, prioritizing key informant interviews for and triangulation data sources and verification of gathered information) With help of the Chief Social Policy/Social Policy Specialist, completing module 1 (mapping) of the tool based on available material/information <p>With the support of the CO team, setting up interviews with stakeholders' government and key strategic partners</p>	5 working days
3.	Data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collecting and reviewing secondary data sources (policy and strategy documents, action plans, program documents, evaluations and lessons learned), key informant interviews), Interviewing key informants Sorting and verifying data <p>Compiling data (synthesizing known information across relevant actors; attributing a score to questions, etc.)</p>	8 working days
4.	Analysis and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint discussion of the assessment findings Attributing readiness score to each question based on the evidence and in discussion with UNICEF colleagues In a consultative manner, assigning readiness scores to each component of a social protection system, 'summarizing conclusions and recommendations Drafting the capacity building plan Presentation to the key stakeholders of the key findings of the assessment and the capacity building plan. <p>Developing the narrative report base on the UNICEF format</p>	12 working days
Develop the national shock responsive social protection capacity building plan including an estimated budget (focusing on the 4 components of UNICEF social protection systems highlighted in the figure above (Figure 1)			

Recourse:

UNICEF reserves the right to terminate the contract and/or withhold all or a portion of payment if the rules and the regulations regarding confidentiality, ethics and procedures of UNICEF and the partners are not followed, the performance is unsatisfactory, or work/deliverables are incomplete, not delivered or fail to meet the deadlines. The deliverables will remain the copyright of UNICEF.

The consultant must respect the confidentiality of the information handled during the assignment. Documents and information provided must be used only for the tasks related to these terms of reference.

ESTIMATED DURATION OF CONTRACT AND TENTATIVE DATES

Duration: 27 working days (January to February 2022)

COSTS AND TERMS OF PAYMENT

The consultancy will be paid for 27 working days.

The agreed fee will be paid to the consultant in 2 installments on receipt of the agreed deliverables as below:

- Payment 1 – Assessment Plan and Inception Report: 30%
- Payment 2 – Upon completion of the final deliverable to a level accepted by UNICEF: 70%

DUTY STATION: State of Palestine (oPT) - Jerusalem

OFFICIAL TRAVEL INVOLVED:

1. International travel to the duty station (Jerusalem)
2. In-country travel to Ramallah

APPLICATION AND EVALUATION PROCESS

Each application will be assessed first on its technical merits and subsequently on its price. In making the final decision, UNICEF considers both technical and financial aspects. UNICEF first reviews the technical aspects of the offer, followed by review of the financial offers of the technically compliant applicants.

The applicants should submit both a CV and cover letter explaining why they are well placed to undertake this work in the State of Palestine as well as a financial proposal for the assignment, outlining all-inclusive fees (including professional fees and other professional expenses, etc.).

The Financial proposal should include the daily rate expected and the lump sum for the full period of the consultancy. If travel to the State of Palestine is considered feasible the consultant should include the cost of any travel.

QUALIFICATION/EXPERIENCE/COMPETENCIES/SKILLS REQUIRED:

The consultant should meet the following requirements:

- Master's degree in Economics, International Development, Social Policy, or other relevant disciplines. Bachelor's degree can be considered with additional professional experience in the areas of social protection and humanitarian cash transfer programming.

- 7 years of relevant work experience in designing and/or implementing cash transfers, especially as a part of the social protection system development and/or strengthening process.
- Demonstrated experience in strengthening the linkages between humanitarian cash transfer and social protection in line with the approach to strengthen humanitarian-development & peace nexus.
- Prior experience in supporting governments to embark on a cash transfer based social protection response will be advantageous.
- Understanding of inclusive and child-sensitive social protection concepts, and practices, including cash plus approaches.
- Demonstrated experience in conducting similar assessments, feasibility studies, research and analysis.
- Excellent writing, and communication skills.
- Familiarity with international norms and standards for humanitarian action.
- Previous experience in carrying out social protection shock responsiveness assessment, using the UNICEF readiness assessment tool is an asset
- Familiarity with the work of the United Nations is an asset
- Fluency in verbal and written English is required, and fluency in Arabic is highly desirable

Core values:

- Care, Respect, Integrity, Trust and Accountability

CHILD SAFEGUARDING

Is this project/assignment considered as “[Elevated Risk Role](#)” from a child safeguarding perspective?

YES /__/ NO /__/ If YES, check all that apply

Direct contact role YES /__/ NO /__/

If yes, please indicate the number of hours/months of direct interpersonal contact with children, or work in their immediately physical proximity, with limited supervision by a more senior member of personnel:

Child data role YES /__/ NO /__/

If yes, please indicate the number of hours/months of manipulating or transmitting personal-identifiable information of children (name, national ID, location data, photos):

More information is available in the [Child Safeguarding SharePoint](#) and [Child Safeguarding FAQs and Updates](#)