

SOCIAL AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IN CRISES: agendas, ambitions and aspirations for more effective intervention

**International Conference organised by the
Better Assistance in Crises (BASIC) Research programme**

*Hosted by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Brighton, UK
September 16th-18th 2025*

CALL FOR PAPERS – DEADLINE 31 JANUARY 2025

Protracted crisis settings are increasingly common, involving multiple compounding shocks, such as conflict, displacement, climate shocks and stresses and institutional fragility. According to the Global Peace Index (GPI), in 2023, there was the highest number of countries engaged in conflict since the second world war, with 97 countries experiencing a fall in peacefulness in 2023 - more than any other year since GPI began records in 2008. By mid-2024, 120 million people were forcibly displaced, or an estimated 1.5% of the world's population, a level that has doubled in the past decade. The spread of crises is undermining efforts at poverty reduction: the World Bank estimates that by 2030 nearly 60% of the world's population that is poor will live in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

Amid ongoing and escalating crises, the combination of chronic and acute vulnerabilities complicates existing approaches to social support. Fragmented humanitarian and government-led social protection systems struggle to meet the needs of populations facing persistent challenges compounded by sudden conflicts and displacements. Humanitarian efforts frequently step in to aid populations with long-term needs during prolonged crises, often due to the perception that state systems are absent, unprepared, or unwilling to assist conflict-affected communities. Similarly, many social protection programmes fail to consider the impacts of conflict and are poorly coordinated with humanitarian efforts, leaving gaps in addressing temporary acute vulnerabilities.

There is significant optimism that climate finance could be used to expand social protection programmes. However, there is currently limited evidence of this happening. Additionally, enduring issues related to absorptive capacities and instability hinder more substantial support for mechanisms that would enable state-led assistance channels. The goal is to develop systems that offer continuous support, integrating social protection with humanitarian aid, to achieve long-term poverty reduction and enhance resilience while also shielding people from the severe impacts of sudden shocks.

This conference will gather researchers, policy makers and practitioners to discuss enhancing global knowledge and action on social protection for crisis-affected populations. With the World Bank's goal to reach 500 million people with social protection by 2030, there's a strong platform for progress. Moreover, both 2024 and 2025 are set to prioritize social protection in conflict situations within the policy domain, highlighted by the Forum on Social Protection in Fragile and Conflict Settings in October 2024 and a high-level panel in 2025. Development financiers and stakeholders are increasingly committed to 'remaining engaged' in conflict settings. The growing recognition of the intersections between climate shocks and conflict, alongside the pressing need for climate and development finance to reach fragile and conflict-affected regions, further underscores the importance of this issue. Various policy initiatives, such as the G20 Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, the Global Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection Just Transitions, the Global Network Against Food Crises, COP28, the Global Refugee Forum, and USP 2030, present valuable opportunities to advance this agenda globally.

and strengthen delivery in fragile and conflict-affected countries. This conference will be an opportunity to sustain momentum in implementing action plans from the Forum on Social Protection in Fragile and Conflict Settings and recommendations from the high-level panel, supported by the latest evidence.

We invite paper proposals on the following themes and questions of interest:

- ***Coordination and financing across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus***
 - How can national and international humanitarian, development and peace actors work together to achieve effective coordination and delivery of social and humanitarian assistance in protracted crises?
 - What combinations of financing, including domestic, development and climate finance, could support the expansion of social protection responses to compounding climate and conflict stresses and shocks?
- ***Politics, accountability and access***
 - What is the relationship between different providers and public authorities in delivering a nexus of social protection and humanitarian assistance in crises?
 - How do social protection programmes impact the experiences of vulnerable and excluded groups, particularly in terms of gender and social inclusion?
- ***Sustaining and maintaining systems in contexts of crises***
 - What do we know about the stability and resilience of social protection systems in fragile and conflict affected settings?
 - How do social protection systems/providers cope with and adapt to sudden upheaval and highly uncertain and fluid settings?
- ***Strengthening livelihoods in protracted crises***
 - To what extent and in which ways do social protection approaches, including cash plus, strengthen livelihoods and resilience in fragile and conflict-affected settings?
 - How does humanitarian provision interact with social protection systems to help support and build livelihoods affected by crises?
- ***Methods and methodologies of researching social assistance in crises***
 - What innovative research methodologies can be employed to study social assistance programmes in protracted crises, considering social difference such as age and gender?
 - What are the challenges and best practices in conducting mixed-method studies on social protection in unstable environments?

We welcome academic and policy-focused proposals for (i) full papers or (ii) briefs or posters, to be prepared before the conference. Indicate your output type in your proposal. Proposals should be no longer than 400 words. Afterward, participants should be open to refining their contributions for publication and broader dissemination. A limited number of bursaries are available for participants from the global south to cover travel, accommodation and visa costs. When submitting your proposal, please indicate whether your attendance is conditional on receiving a bursary. The conference will be conducted in English.

The Conference will be primarily an in-person event, but with some sessions and plenary as hybrid, with a lunchtime finish on 18th September.

Submissions should be sent to: BASICconference@ids.ac.uk **DEADLINE: 31st January 2025**