

Social protection to avoid lost decade

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During times of national economic difficulties, families begin to cope with changes by adopting other expenditure strategies that are meant to aid them in sustaining their lives. However, these often impact education, health and well-being, with a focus on children, resulting in debt surpluses, and thus propagating the intergenerational inheritance of poverty.

The economic crisis that hit the world in 2008 has fundamentally affected the lives of many people and families, even in developed nations, where millions became victims to poverty and marginalization. Increased unemployment paralleled with loss of income, as well as increased vulnerability were among the prominent social impacts of the crisis.

However, the main effects of the crisis lean to being political and social, not economic.

Research has shown that the social and political impacts of economic crisis could continue on for a decade. The years after the crisis will witness sharp rising in political polarization. Neutralizing its long-term consequences could take a very long time.

Furthermore, social security systems as well as social security funds, as critical policy instruments, are expected to suffer with such an evasive crisis. A significant number of these systems have experienced severe deterioration of their asset portfolio prices, undermining their viability in the long-term.

Therefore, the following questions need to be addressed: How should social security and social protection systems effectively react to alleviate the impact of the crisis? How can these systems act as instantaneous counter-cyclical stabilizers? What are the further challenges of social security systems that are already suffering severe flaws? What lessons can we learn from past crises? What are the obstacles that communities may face in such crisis? And, what are the questions to be addressed to increase societies' level of preparedness?

Every citizen is vulnerable to these shocks. Low-income and middle classes have limited access to quality risk management resources and coping mechanisms, resulting in adverse long-term effects on human capital and perpetuating the cycle of multidimensional poverty across generations. Poverty is generally conveyed via five key transmission channels that connect macro-level shocks to poor people: employment, prices, public and private monetary transfers, assets, and accessibility to products and services. How these channels transmit shocks defines the affected parties, the intensity of effect, and its duration.

Thus, effective crisis intervention policies should vary from regular social protection tools because of the scale and complexity of the impacts. Social Protection devices that work under normal circumstances are not certain to be effective in situations of crisis. Explicitly, crisis response demands the mobilization of substantial financial and administrative resources in a limited duration, because it is crucial to begin implementation quickly on a wide enough scope so that to shield the largest number of people against the effects of the crisis, warranting their short term survival and avoiding negative long-term penalties.

Today, Lebanon is facing a tough economic crisis that resulted in mass laying-off of employees. The social effects of deepening deprivation that came as a result of the crisis, and a weak retort to social security and protection policies set course for the increase of extreme poverty threatening opportunities for prosperity, security, and sustainable growth. Such crises are complicated and involve many forms of human insecurity.

The relationship between state security and human security is complementary such as they are both constantly reinforcing and depending on one another. Human security is based on an understanding of insecurities across multiple sectors. It thus requires a great awareness of risks which includes triggers of insecurity related, for example, to economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security. Moreover, when addressing these insecurities, human security, in its operational instruments, accentuates the interconnectedness of risks and reactions.

"Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security." After being inserted in Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, this sentence became a self-evident fact that stresses the significance of making every human feel secure.

The International Labor Organization describes the term "social protection" as an action lead by society to meet demands coming from economic and social vulnerabilities as well as other threats that left people in suffering conditions. There is an intersection between social security, social protection and human security instruments. Social security is a factor of social protection, and a great responsibility for those accountable for defining and putting it into practice. On the other hand, social protection, is one of the main pillars of human security. It has two purposes: one addressing economic threats and vulnerabilities, and the other addressing social harm.

It is only fair to say that the core value of today's societies is security represented in national, societal, and human security. The commitment to human protection broadens the reach of security analysis and strategies from territorial defense to people's welfare. The commitment to human protection is concerned with individual's survival, well-being, and dignity. So, at a given time and location, what threats are considered to be most relevant? Numerous best practices and observations can be referred to so that to have a description of best practices of social protection systems, with a particular focus on their fragile state during crisis situations.

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