



"63-year-old Zeina Njuguna has been selling chapati and beans in Old Town, Mombasa to feed and educate her five children alone since 1988 after her husband died. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, she would earn Ksh. 500-1000 daily. Since the pandemic began, she has struggled to get by on Ksh 300 daily." | Photo: Brian Otieno / Oxfam In Kenya

CONFERENCE REPORT

'RAISING THE SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOOR'

12TH NOVEMBER, NAIROBI, KENYA



OXFAM



Dr Asha Mohammed – Secretary General, Kenya Red Cross Society | Photo: SWITCH TV / Oxfam In Kenya

BACKGROUND

1. **The Kenyan Constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and many of our common cultural beliefs make no compromise on the value that all human beings should have adequate water, food, shelter and healthcare.** Yet, seven months after COVID-19 was first detected in Kenya, some of the most vulnerable and hardworking citizens living in urban informal settlements and working in the informal sector, are experiencing widespread hunger, income loss and increased rates of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).
2. **Urban informal settlements are typically overcrowded, with poor or non-existent sanitation facilities, and prohibitively expensive access to clean water, creating the ideal transmission conditions for the spread of the COVID-19 virus.** In Nairobi, many informal workers live in informal settlements which accommodate 56% of the capital's population on just 5% of the total residential land. Informal sector workers account for 84% of total employment in Kenya. Before COVID-19, these citizens were already at risk of destitution, hunger and disease outbreaks. Most people rely on the market to purchase food. And to purchase food, they need an income. When the pandemic led to job losses, the impact in the informal settlements was felt disproportionately.
3. **In July 2020, a food security assessment of 10 informal settlements in Nairobi found that on average, families were able to afford less than half of the food and basic necessities they needed¹,** that 55% of families were severely food insecure, and that only a quarter had one stable income earner. This suggests that nearly 1.5 million people in Nairobi are experiencing severe hunger, and over 40,000 children are acutely malnourished. Women face extraordinary challenges during the pandemic². Alongside food and nutrition insecurity, government statistics indicate a rise of 42% in domestic and sexual violence cases.
4. **Coordinated 'Urban Early Warning Early Action' mechanisms have proved essential in rapidly assessing informal settlements for livelihood risks.** The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have indicated that comprehensive Social Protection can protect the most vulnerable individuals from poverty and destitution when

1 The study was conducted by a consortium of NGOs including Oxfam in Kenya, the Kenyan Red Cross Society, Concern Worldwide, ACTED, IMPACT Initiatives, the Centre for Rights Education and Awareness (CREAW) and the Wangu Kanja Foundation.

2 Between March and May 2020, the Centre for Rights Education and Awareness (CREAW) recorded a 64% increase in the number of women and girls calling their gender-based violence helpline to request assistance

they lack income and are affected by shocks. The challenge to build a comprehensive Social Protection system in Kenya is being led by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection's flagship “*Inua Jami*” programme which includes the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP); the Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (CT-OVC); the Cash Transfer for Persons with Severe Disabilities (PWSD); the Older Persons Cash Transfer (OPCT). The programme disbursed a total of KES 13 billion (\$130 million) in 2020.

5. **Private citizens, business, I/NGOs, civil society, development partners, and the United Nations have all played an important role in supporting at-risk households**, some directly and others aligning with existing government social assistance programmes to expand their reach and cater to more urgent needs of vulnerable families. These programmes have shown how social assistance can and does protect the most vulnerable in our communities from the economic shockwaves caused by crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. They have demonstrated that social assistance has the potential to help vulnerable households stave off hunger, infection and eviction, and they can also help reduce the vulnerability of survivors and those at risk of sexual and gender-based violence. It is also clear that more can be done to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of a social protection safety net to meet the ongoing needs of vulnerable and food insecure Kenyans.
6. **The ‘Raising the Social Protection Floor’ dialogue sought to discuss how best to support the Kenyan government’s Social Protection programmes and strengthen partnerships** between the government and civil society, development partners, the UN system and the private sector. The multi-stakeholder dialogue built upon nationwide experiences of urban Social Protection interventions that seek to address the economic impact of COVID-19 at the household level. It explored how social assistance specifically (ie regular non-contributory transfers from the government) could be expanded to people not currently enrolled in social protection programmes, be

supported to become more shock-responsive and be strengthened to make it more effective, sustainable and accountable in the long-term.

7. **This conference report provides a summary of the panellist’s discussions.** The detailed workshop interactions and deliberations of each session are captured on [video](#). The timeline of the event is indicated at the end of the document. In brief, conference participants found that:

i). **Social protection is a human and constitutional right.** Social protection can contribute towards efforts to reduce inequality in Kenya and achieve the development objectives of the Government of Kenya’s ‘Big Four Agenda’ and the Sustainable Development Goals. However, the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 are exacerbating inequality and threatening development gains. Building a strong social protection system requires careful planning and adequate financing, fast-tracked transparent processes to ensure funds reach the affected population in a timely manner, and better alignment and coordination with government institutions to achieve sustainable impact at scale. When done well, inclusive vulnerability targeting involves affected communities and maximizes resources at a time of crisis.

ii). **COVID-19 has caused unprecedented shocks to household food and nutrition security.** Lessons from the response have highlighted the benefits of strengthened and expanded urban social assistance cash transfers. Applying these lessons, and constant innovation is required. Social protection is multisectoral and requires multi-stakeholder action. The pandemic had redefined the understanding of vulnerability, with the impact being felt far beyond groups normally supported by social assistance. Investment in systems’ preparedness and no-regrets decisions to respond early to shocks are essential: early warning and early action are critical in saving lives and livelihoods. Continuous coordination is required and



Conference attendees – Kenyatta International Conference Centre | Photo: SWITCH TV / Oxfam In Kenya

needs to be improved. The government's Single Registry for Social Protection can help with information management, if all stakeholders can access.

iii). Social protection systems can be improved to ensure the hardest to reach are reached first and that no-one is left behind.

Collaboration and coordination between all stakeholders are essential. Of particular concern has been the increase in Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV), which was already high before the pandemic. Increase support services to SGBV survivors, to vulnerable families and children in distress, to people living on the streets, and to those without the correct administrative documents, needs to be accelerated. Many children have been left out of public social assistance programmes. Maintaining an accountability system that considers people of concern's needs and preferences will help ensure that no-one is left behind.

iv). COVID-19 is not the first crisis that people in informal settlements have had to deal with, nor will it be the last. The right time for investment is now. People require support to recover from crises and build resilience to future shocks especially given threats posed by the climate crisis. The role of government in shielding the most vulnerable from extreme food insecurity can prevent loss of life and market disruption simultaneously. Market systems that listen to and address the needs of women and youth should be encouraged. Technology, digitalisation and access to information have a vital role. Improved access to markets, fiscal stimulus packages that enable small businesses to enter or re-enter the productive system, an enabling environment that facilitates access to credit and services, expanded access to health services for a healthier workforce were some of the resilience strengthening measures discussed.



8. The conference was organised by Oxfam in Kenya, as the coordinator of the Urban Cash Consortium that has been providing cash assistance to over 30,000 Households in the informal settlements of Nairobi and Mombasa. Oxfam and the consortium members, Kenyan Red Cross Society, Concern Worldwide, ACTED, IMPACT Initiatives, the Centre for Rights Education and Awareness and the Wangu Kanja Foundation, extend their appreciation to His Excellency, Mr Simon Kiprono Chelugui - Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, and all panellists for their participation, and to the European Union, the Royal Danish Embassy, Nairobi and the German Federal Foreign Office for their funding of the Urban Cash Consortium and the conference.



From left: Dr Asha Mohammed – Secretary General, Kenya Red Cross Society; HE Simon Mordue – Ambassador of the European Union to Kenya; HE Simon Kiprono Chelugui – Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection; HE Ole Thonke – Ambassador, Royal Danish Embassy | Photo: SWITCH TV / Oxfam In Kenya

PANEL 1:



Social Protection in Kenya – Converging Local, National and Global Agendas

Panellists:

Lydia Zigomo – Regional Director, Oxfam;
HE Simon Mordue – Ambassador of the European Union to Kenya;
HE Simon Kiprono Chelugui – Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection;
Dr Asha Mohammed – Secretary General, Kenya Red Cross Society;
Siddharth Chatterjee – United Nations Resident Coordinator;
HE Ole Thonke – Ambassador, Royal Danish Embassy

The panellists discussed how social assistance can contribute towards efforts to reduce inequality in Kenya and achieve the development objectives of the Government of Kenya’s ‘Big Four Agenda’ and the Sustainable Development Goals. In summary:

1. **Panellists welcomed the bold leadership of the government in acting quickly to put measures in place to stem the spread of COVID-19 and enact measures to mitigate the socio-economic impacts.** These measures have bought time and saved lives. The crisis caused by COVID-19 is one that all countries are grappling with: World Bank estimates suggest that 49 million more people will fall to extreme poverty by December 2020. In Kenya, 230,000 people left formal employment, and over 1.5 million people working in the informal sector have lost their source of livelihoods since COVID-19 was first detected in March: unemployment has risen to 10.4% in September 2020 from 5.2% in March 2020. Further actions are required with further unemployment threatened by the current upsurge in cases.
2. **Panellists emphasized that social protection is a human and constitutional right.** It is enshrined in Article 43 of the Bill of Rights, is key to the attainment of the 2030 Agenda and is essential for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1, 5, 8 and 10. The pandemic is a real threat to the realization of these rights and goals. Panellists also stressed that Social Protection is not a cost but an investment in the future, in tackling poverty and exclusion. 45% of the world’s population access one type of social protection benefit and these can be better leveraged to emerge from the crisis stronger. Indeed, it was noted that economies tend to perform better where investments in social protection have been made. Social protection is a prudent measure for inclusive growth – investing in social protection becomes key in addressing universal health coverage. However, with 94,000 persons with disabilities, 500,000 orphan children and 1.2 million older persons, and rising inequality – there is a long way to go in having universal Social Protection coverage in Kenya. It was noted that the national social assistance

schemes have contributed in increasing both purchasing power and life expectancy and that the government has ambitions to improve this further.

3. **The panellists noted that COVID-19 has exacerbated inequality, and inequality has enabled its spread.** Panellists highlighted the imperative of reducing inequality as a way of reducing the impact of this and future crises. Many in the urban informal settlements lack basic services and infrastructure such as adequate housing, water and sanitation. Their provision is the primary role of national and local government, with other stakeholders aligning their support to the duty bearer’s efforts. It was noted that the SDGs seek to ‘leave no one behind’ but that if we do, we do so at our own risk.
4. **Building strong social protection systems requires careful planning and adequate financing.** The panellists underlined the importance of preparedness and the need to invest in shock-responsive systems that enable the identification of affected population in a timely and effective way. Food security surveillance systems, for example, are critical in aiding the facilitation of cash transfers. As the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) has shown, social protection requires strategic investment and prioritisation of tax in sustaining these systems. Examples of investments made by development partners prior to COVID-19 include the HSNP and NICHE (cash transfer with nutrition advice) that is being scaled up nationally. Panellists encouraged stakeholders to look at effective linkages between development (including enhanced digital services, land registry reforms, one-stop universal health coverage) and investment in strengthening humanitarian systems. Urban food insecurity is an issue that needs to be addressed systemically. The crisis has shown how many who did not fall under standard vulnerability criteria could become vulnerable during a crisis, and this needs to be taken into account when designing shock-responsive Social Protection programmes. Panellists were encouraged by efforts to instigate a ‘single

registry' that will go a long way to harmonize the different social protection systems available and reduce duplication.

5. **Panellists highlighted the need for fast-tracked processes to ensure funds reached the affected populations in a timely manner** and flexibility and dexterity in the administration of such funds. The Government of Kenya has approved the enactment of social assistance fund bill (government funded) that is currently passing through parliament. Once enacted, development partners can contribute to the fund for coordinated delivery of social assistance work. It was noted, however, that the repurposing of finances meant a likely impact on progress being made towards the attainment of SDGs and the government's Big 4 agenda. Panellists highlighted some of the actions undertaken by the government and development partners including:

- a). The Government of Kenya allocated 10 billion KES to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 in 47 counties and is providing 333,200 households with 1,000 KES on a weekly basis;
- b). The European Union's EUR 5 million (600 million KES) supported 18,400 households in Nairobi with an overall target of 80,000 individuals benefiting from the transfers and support to survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV);
- c). The United Nations' has repurposed funds from its 2018-2022 plan to address public health and livelihoods programmes due to COVID-19. Additionally, the UN launched an appeal of \$267million; and
- d). The Government of Denmark set up a \$150 million global support fund for quick COVID-19 responses. A \$3.3 million programme providing cash transfers to 40,000 people in Nairobi and Mombasa, administered by Oxfam, is an example of the use of these funds in Kenya.

6. **The panel urged improved and inclusive vulnerability targeting, noting that when done well, resources at a time of crisis are maximised.** The role of the Kenya Cash Working Group (co-chaired by the KRCS and NDMA) was lauded as being instrumental in shaping the conversation on technical, operational and strategic aspects of cash transfers with harmonized targeting criteria, linking coordination of social protection with the government to avoid duplication. However, it was noted that attention was still needed on harmonizing cash transfer value amounts, with some organizations providing for 50% of the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) [that includes provision for food, rent, health care, transport and communication] and some for the Minimum Food Basket (MFB). Often households will cut down on food to pay rent, for example. Panellists also urged that no-one be left behind, including ensuring funding to ensure that children had access to good nutrition and education, that female-led small businesses, for example, stay afloat, and that the needs of migrants and refugees are also met.

7. **Panellists agreed on the importance of inclusive partnerships to accelerate change and the need to better align and coordinate with government institutions for sustainable impact at scale.** Coordination with government is essential for coherence, and continued dialogue is needed on how best INGOs, local NGOs and donors can support the government expand and innovate areas where there are gaps in social protection. Furthermore, panellists highlighted the importance of recognizing, including and celebrating the role played by local organizations. They have access to communities and complement government services, identification of beneficiaries and linking them to other services including the government system.





From left: Waihiga Mwaura – Citizen TV Anchor & Conference Moderator; Lauren Landis – Country Director, WFP | Photo: SWITCH TV / Oxfam In Kenya

PANEL 2:



The Impact of Urban Shock-Responsive Safety Nets

Panellists:

Dr Daniel Karugu – Nairobi County Council – personal capacity;
Mat Cousins – Humanitarian Director, Oxfam Kenya;
Lauren Landis – Country Director, WFP;
Josephine Gitonga – Adviser, UK Aid/FCDO;
Caroline Teti – Operations Director, Give Directly;
Rachel Nguli – Product Service Manager, Safaricom;
Sigrid Kühlke – European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO);
John Gachigi – Head of Social Assistance Unit, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection

The panellists discussed the unprecedented shocks to household food and nutrition security caused by COVID-19, and the lessons that have been learnt to strengthen and expand urban shock responsive social assistance

1. **Panellists highlighted that the pandemic had redefined vulnerability, with the impact being felt far beyond groups normally supported by safety nets.** It was noted that over 40% of the population in urban informal settlements was food insecure and lacked access to basic services, and that 40,000 children under five in Nairobi suffered from acute malnutrition before the pandemic. Even the slightest shock can cause an increase in poverty, but a shock of the magnitude caused by COVID-19 will affect hundreds of thousands of households. Social protection, and particularly social assistance, needs to be shock-responsive and enable horizontal scale-up (more people) and vertical scale-up (more money). Existing government programmes, such as Inua Jamii lay a solid foundation for the scale-up of support but must be flexible to react to new shocks and include newly vulnerable people – the registration of vulnerable households can easily become outdated. Panellists also emphasized that shocks do not affect all people equally – women are affected more as they also carry the unpaid-care burden. There has been a horrifying increase in Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). Women must also be at the centre of decision making and programming in recovery efforts.
2. **Investment in systems' preparedness and no-regrets decisions to respond early to shocks were felt by panellists to be essential.** Early warning (detection) and early action (response) are critical in saving lives – and food security surveillance can provide an indicator on the impact of shocks at the household level. Investments made by the Nairobi City Council on their [award-winning](#) Urban Early Warning Early Action programme, for example, enabled the provision of data to decision-makers in the central government within a few days, and cash transfer programmes to start promptly. There is scope for Nairobi to mentor other urban conurbations. Elsewhere, early warning

systems have used vegetation coverage index (VCI) to trigger early payments and when independently verified proved helpful in avoiding subjective arguments on when funding should be released. These systems must be supported with adequate financing and disbursement mechanisms to release funding. Having a pre-prepared emergency fund with clear and transparent guidelines can ensure the timeliness and efficiency of the response, but there is also a need to examine sustainable financing for such a fund. Shocks from impacts such as cholera, election-related disturbances and the climate crisis must be prepared for. Funds are not always available for social protection.

3. **Panellists emphasized the need for continuous coordination, and the use of a 'Single Registry'.** It was noted that a government run Single Registry for Social Protection would help with information management as it allows strong analysis of data – targeting, implementation, monitoring and reporting. It also important in informing evidence-based policy for quick scale up. Panellists were encouraged that progress on the Single Registry was being made, urged all government departments to provide data, encouraged other actors to utilize the system and hoped that it would be fully operational soon. It was understood that data-sharing protocols to ensure data protection the establishment of a multi-stakeholder forum were underway. It was noted that the existing infrastructure used to administer cash transfers, such as the use of mobile money transfer, is good for scalability as it is data-based. It was felt that the single registry should ensure interoperability with existing systems, such as the HSNP, as a shock-responsive mechanism and scaled up during crisis.
4. **Panellists discussed the importance of multi-stakeholder multi-sectoral action,** noting that social protection is multisectoral and includes health, education, sanitation, and food security. Response to crises requires a whole-of-society response – led by government and utilizing the varying capacities and expertise from the private sector, UN, NGOs



and development partners. Local humanitarian action ('localization') has always been there and will be there in the future and a shift is required to examine how support to local NGOs can be improved. Trust and transparency are essential, and organizations based in communities can help amplify the voices of people affected by crises and hold duty-bearers accountable.

5. **The panel discussed the need for constant innovation and of learning lessons from this and previous crises.** Many of the cash transfer programmes, for example, rely on mobile money transfer – a system that was pioneered by Safaricom to encourage financial inclusion, has evolved over time to support disaster response and has proved to be timely and cost-effective. Kenya is a world leader in this methodology and the government has utilized MPESA as one way of disbursing 78.5

billion KES to 1.1 million households during the crisis, including support to 333,000 new recipients. These valuable insights should be shared with others in the region, whilst lessons can also be learned from elsewhere: there is a fair amount of documentation available to practitioners (i.e. the ECHO guidance on [tools and methodology](#)). The panellists urged continued innovation, suggesting that the use of Artificial Intelligence could help with remote sensing, improved timeliness and sharper targeting of vulnerabilities, whilst noting that questions on individual data rights and data protection would need to be resolved. Other innovations, such as Give Directly's trial of Universal Basic Income that will provide 20,000 people in Western and Rift Valley with 2,250 KES/month for 12 years – now in its 4th year – should generate data and lessons that could enable the government to consider taking this to scale.



From left: Symon Thuo – ACTED; Wangechi Wachira, CREAM Director; Winnie Obure – Wangu Kanja Foundation; Lisa-Marie Ouedraogo-Wasi – UNICEF | Photo: SWITCH TV / Oxfam In Kenya

PANEL 3:



Leaving no one behind:

Supporting survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, homeless people, minors, and other acutely vulnerable Kenyans

Panellists:

Hon. Esther Passaris, Nairobi Women's Representative;
Winnie Obure - Wangu Kanja Foundation;
Wangechi Wachira, CREAM Director;
Lisa-Marie Ouedraogo-Wasi – UNICEF;
Symon Thuo – ACTED;
Nelson Munyiri – Mukuru Youth Initiative.

Panellists explored how the social protection system can be improved to ensure the hardest to reach are reached first and that no-one is left behind.

1. Panellists urged stakeholders to maintain and increase collaboration and coordination. It was noted how the COVID-19 crisis response encouraged coordination and collaboration among government institutions, humanitarian organisations and the private sector. The way forward for all actors is to build on this experience to develop a more effective Social Protection system in a resource-constrained environment and ensure that new initiatives are complementary and linked to existing programmes, such as the National Hospital Insurance Fund. Examples of multi-stakeholder collaboration included the Office of Women's Representative working with the National Government Affirmative Action Fund to support COVID 19 affected populations; the introduction of SGBV centres/focal points in every police station in Nairobi; the provision of NHIF cards

to SGBV survivors to access medical services. Panellists reinforced the concept of Social Protection as a Basic Human Right, discussed by Panel 1.

2. Increased support services to SGBV survivors is imperative. Panellists recalled how SGBV incidents were not unknown of before the pandemic, with 45% of women aged 15-49 having experienced some form of GBV, and how the COVID-19 crisis has led to a dramatic increase in SGBV incidents: between March and November 2020, reported cases rose by 53%. The provision of medical services remains insufficient and needs strengthening. Special needs of survivors need to be addressed systematically, and referral pathways need to be updated and strengthened. Psychosocial and legal support remains essential, as is the availability of safe shelters, that are unable to accommodate all the needs: only Makueni County has a State-supported shelter. Panellists agreed that cash transfers were instrumental in enabling SGBV survivors to



From left: HE Ole Thonke – Ambassador, Royal Danish Embassy; HE Simon Kiprono Chelugui – Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection; HE Simon Mordue – Ambassador of the European Union to Kenya | Photo: SWITCH TV / Oxfam In Kenya



Nelson Munyiri – Founder, Mukuru Youth Initiative | Photo: SWITCH TV / Oxfam In Kenya

access food, address basic needs and reduce tensions and violence in the households during the pandemic, and that including such temporary support measures in the national Social Protection system should be considered.

3. **Support to vulnerable families and children in distress needs to be scaled-up.** A high number of children in Kenya were struggling before COVID-19: in 2016 a study found that 72% of children were living on less than 150 KES a day. The recent [census on street families](#) conducted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection found over 46,000 people living in the streets in Kenya. Many children have been left out of public social assistance: in the light of COVID-19 crisis, 30,000 children were released from care institutions; panellists advocated for ways to systematise assistance to these children and their families by creating links with the regular Social Protection programmes. A global crisis requires a global response: Universal Child Benefits might cushion vulnerable families from new or recurring crises, and cash transfers have proved relatively simple to implement.

4. **Panellists agreed on the need to build and maintain an accountability system** that considers People of Concern's needs and preferences and to ensure transparent communications among all stakeholders. An effective Complaints Response Mechanism is based on trust, which requires time and effort by all those involved. There was agreement on how communication with communities needs to guarantee the strengthening of referral pathways, to enable individuals to act on their needs and not be simply recipients of support. There was consensus on the need to provide adequate resources for an effective and coordinated CRM, in terms of funding, technology, and training of accountability staff. All actors need to collaborate to ensure the voice of people we are serving is listened to and acted on.
5. **The panel discussion ended with the presentation of the video "Wake-up call",** which highlighted the importance of media to engage youth in raising social issues within the communities living in informal settlements, with a language that is accessible to everyone.



From left: Peter Awour – UNDP; HE Katrin Hagemann – Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Kenya | Photo: SWITCH TV / Oxfam In Kenya

PANEL 4:



From Response to Recovery - building resilience to future shocks

Panellists:

Peter Milo – Concern Worldwide;

Paolo Belli – World Bank;

Victor Awour – UNDP;

HE Katrin Hagemann – Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Kenya

COVID-19 is not the first crisis that people in informal settlements have had to deal with, nor will it be the last. Panellists discussed how people can be supported to recover from this crisis and build resilience to future shocks. Whilst resilience is a multi-faceted inter-play between social, economic, environmental and political choices the panel’s discussion homed in on market responses.

1. The creation of inclusive market systems can provide pathways to resilience for youth and women. Panellists discussed on how to support the development of market systems that address the needs and specificities of women and youth. This includes tailored training, certifications, skills-transfers programmes that are based on individuals’ preferences and comprehensive market assessments, to ensure long term, sustainable recovery. The role of technology, digitalisation and access to information was highlighted, as they play a vital role in enabling people to access and scale up market systems. There was agreement on the need for investments in training, certification, transfer of skills for recovery. Locally developed innovations need to be encouraged. There was agreement on the need to encourage gender representation in innovation, and wider participation from vulnerable communities.

2. Access to markets and credit facilities are needed and should be developed in consultation with communities, government and business. There was agreement on the need to support the scaling up of good enterprise ideas from residents of informal settlements. Access to credit needs to be strengthened and tailored for these entrepreneurs to enable them to access capital- and this requires further examination

the current credit rating system and innovative micro-finance mechanisms that can support the delivery of loans to start or enhance IGAs and diversify livelihoods. The discussion expanded to touch on the need to strengthen resilience, and support systems that encourage adaptation to shocks, including those posed by climate change. Panellists agreed that accessing the market requires more than funding, and that entrepreneurs should be supported through additional trainings, including on social skills and capacity to evaluate and face risks.

3. Panellists agreed that the right time for investment in recovery efforts is now. The government has a critical role in strengthening an enabling environment for recovery, but all stakeholders’ perspectives should be canvassed to ensure the recovery is equitable and fair. There was agreement on how the Government of Kenya managed to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in a way that prevented the loss of lives and market disruption simultaneously, allowing the movement of goods to avoid the collapse of the economy, and the soaring of food prices seen in other countries. This effectively shielded the most vulnerable from extreme food insecurity. Panellists discussed the role the government can play in adopting a fiscal stimulus package to enable small businesses to enter or re-enter the productive system. The government can play a vital role in strengthening an enabling environment to facilitate access to credit and services. Expanding the access to health services – the NHIF – will secure a healthier workforce, that will improve productivity and ultimately benefit the country’s economy.





Peter Milo - Concern Worldwide | Photo: SWITCH TV / Oxfam In Kenya

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conference discussions, Oxfam and the Urban Cash Consortium members offer the following recommendations:

In the immediate and short-term:

1. **Continue and expand the amount of financing available for social assistance** and micro, small and medium enterprise (MSMEs) growth programmes to account for unmet gaps in their Minimum Expenditure Basket. Factor in the costs of rent, medicines and sanitary goods into the calculation of cash transfer amounts, as these are costs that must be, and yet often cannot be, met;
2. **Ensure that social protection assistance is more inclusive to include vastly more informal settlement residents** and informal sector workers that are food insecure, and ensure that underserved categories of vulnerable people such as pregnant or lactating women and young children, street families and those without official documents, and minority

groups are included. Ensure that accessibility challenges faced by older persons, people who are chronically sick and people living with disabilities are addressed;

3. **Scale-up and increase investment in gender-based violence protection and intervention resources**, such as safe shelters, referral systems and legal protection;
4. **Strengthen and improve the coordination and sharing of information** between existing government ministries, civil society, UN and NGO initiatives to avoid duplication and maximize efficiency and speed in social assistance programming;

In the medium term:

1. **Build upon the success of the Government of Kenya's globally - recognized shock responsive** Hunger Safety Net Programme and learning from the ongoing pandemic response. Strengthen existing Kenyan social assistance schemes to be shock responsive for future humanitarian crises;

2. **Build and maintain strong national transparency, feedback and complaint mechanisms** to make social protection programmes as accountable as possible to the public they serve;
3. **Invest in preparedness:** Encourage and fund coordinated ‘Early Warning Early Action’ mechanisms within county governments that routinely assess informal settlements for livelihood risks, and help mitigate and respond quickly to the impacts of slow-onset emergencies;
4. **Increase financing of multi sectoral activities** that will improve social assistance outcomes, and which are crucial to keeping vulnerable communities safe from outbreaks like COVID-19, especially where there is a chronic lack of water and hygiene facilities, such as in urban informal settlements.

The recommendations align with the findings of research set out in Oxfam’s briefing paper, ‘**Shelter from the Storm: The global need for universal social protection in times of COVID-19**’³ which advocates that:

Low- and middle-income countries should:

1. **Increase budgets for social protection by 2% of GDP on average**, to close existing financing gaps and ensure a minimum income package for children, elderly people, mothers and people with disabilities to act as an automatic stabilizer that supports faster economic recovery;
2. **Maximize the poverty- and inequality-reducing effects of social protection by aiming to reach all people with one or more benefits**, delivering benefits to women, informal workers, migrants, refugees, young people and other groups often excluded; and providing universal coverage to everyone who fits into one of the

contingencies (e.g. unemployed, living with disability, maternity, etc.). Aiming for greater benefit adequacy, move income replacement social assistance benefits closer to at the least 15% GDP per capita.

3. **Increase taxes on the richest citizens and corporations in order to pay for universal social protection.** New wealth taxes should be introduced to respond to the pandemic.

Rich countries have a role to play in ensuring everyone has access to universal social protection, including by:

1. **Establishing a Global Fund for Social Protection that supports low- and middle-income countries in realizing social protection for all**, through better and increased technical cooperation, and the provision of co-financing to incentivize low-income countries to invest more in social protection;
2. **Significantly increasing the quantity of international aid in support of social protection from rich economies** in the G20 and other OECD Development Assistance Committee members. Rich countries have only increased their aid for social protection to lower-income countries by \$5.8bn – the equivalent of less than five cents for every \$100 raised to tackle COVID-19;
3. **Cancelling debt, profoundly revising the Debt Service Suspension Initiative and extending debt relief.** A cancellation would make a huge difference, particularly in highly indebted countries. If the resources saved from debt relief were channelled into social protection, 26 countries could provide a six-month public transfer to everyone above the age of 60 at a level able to cover basic needs, as well as provide support to every person with disabilities and every child;
4. **Allocating \$3tn in Special Drawing Rights** through the IMF, alongside a commitment from the IMF and the World Bank to give immediate loans and grants without imposing conditions on future social spending, such as austerity.

³ <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621132/bp-social-protection-covid-19-151220-en.pdf>



Zeina Njuguna was one of nearly 30,000 households to receive monthly social protection cash transfers funded by the European Union and Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) to help meet the needs of the most vulnerable Kenyans during the COVID-19 pandemic. | Photo: Brian Otieno / Oxfam In Kenya

TIMELINE OF THE EVENT:

Video Screening: [Surviving the Pandemic: Anne's Story](#) - 9'25"

Panel 1

1. Lydia Zigomo, Regional Director, Oxfam - 15'09"
2. HE Simon Mordue, Ambassador of the European Union to Kenya - 22'30"
3. HE Simon Kiprono Chelugui, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection - 38'55"
4. Dr Asha Mohammed, Secretary General, Kenya Red Cross Society - 58'16"
5. Siddharth Chatterjee, United Nations Resident Coordinator - 1h07'47"
6. HE Ole Thonke, Ambassador, Royal Danish Embassy - 1h17'24"

Presentation by Tim Britten, Country Coordinator, IMPACT - 1h36'54"

Panel 2

1. Dr Daniel Karugu - Nairobi County Council - personal capacity - 1h54'40"
2. Mat Cousins, Humanitarian Director, Oxfam in Kenya - 2h00'20"
3. Lauren Landis, Country Director, WFP - 2h07'02"
4. Josephine Gitonga, Adviser, UK Aid/FCDO - 2h10'49"
5. Caroline Teti, Operations Director, Give Directly - 2h18'52"
6. Rachel Nguli, Product Service Manager, Safaricom - 2h26'00"
7. Sigrid Kühlke - Regional Advisor, European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) - 2h33.14"
8. John Gachigi, Head of Social Assistance Unit, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection - 2h47'37"

Video screening: [Surviving the Pandemic: Sarah's Story](#) (2h57'05")

Panel 3

1. Hon. Esther Passaris, Nairobi Women's Representative - 3h02'10"
2. Winnie Obure, Wangu Kanja Foundation - 3h12'14"
3. Wangechi Wachira, Executive Director, CREAM - 3h17'07"
4. Lisa-Marie Ouedraogo-Wasi, Social Policy Specialist (Social Protection) UNICEF - 3h25'42"
5. Symon Thuo, ACTED - 3h32'00"

Nelson Munyiri, Founder and Executive Director Mukuru Youth Initiative: Video screening: [Wake up call](#) - 3h40'12"

Panel 4

1. Peter Milo, Programme Director, Concern Worldwide - 3h50'55"
2. Paolo Belli - Practice Manager, Social Protection and Jobs, World Bank - 3h59'23"
3. Victor Awour, UNDP - 4h06'08"

Closing remarks

1. HE Katrin Hagemann, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Kenya - 4h15'18"

