

BASIC Side Event

Building Resilient Social Assistance and Protection Systems in Conflict and Crisis: Insights from Yemen, Iraq, and Lebanon

We would like to warmly invite you to a **Better Assistance in Crises (BASIC) side event** hosted by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and Arab Reform Institute (ARI).

Time and venue: 8 November 2024, 9 am - 12.30 pm (Beirut time) – Online.

Objective: Building on discussions from the ARI conferences held on November 6 and 7 around financing mechanisms for universal social protection systems in the Arab region, this side event will highlight cutting-edge empirical findings from the FCDO-supported Better Assistance in Crises (BASIC) research program. The event will explore how diverse local and national actors, often operating in fragmented, crisis-prone settings, shape complex social protection landscapes through adaptive, locally grounded strategies. Presentations and discussions will focus on Yemen, Iraq, and Lebanon, spotlighting how resilient social protection responses are developed under conflict, displacement, and protracted crises.

Presenters will explore how, in crisis-affected regions where government-led social protection is often absent, political parties, local actors, and NGOs become the backbone of social resilience by adapting essential services. In Lebanon, fragmented, party-led, and sectarian social protection regimes challenge traditional fiscal models of aid, as these systems both reinforce fractured social contracts and, in some cases, foster adaptive, community-based resilience. Insights from Iraq's Kurdistan Region (KRI) and other crisis-prone areas will reveal how frontline staff and local networks influence the design and delivery of social assistance, reshaping debates around accountability and adaptation within social protection reform.

By examining Yemen's decade-long conflict and Lebanon's economic decline, this event will highlight how national and local capacities persistently adapt, building resilient frameworks that maintain support and continuity amid severe disruptions. Through these examples, the session will illustrate the critical role that local and national actors play in shaping and sustaining social protection ecosystems across the Arab region, suggesting potential pathways for future policies that embrace these dynamics for more sustainable, inclusive social protection.

Presenters:

- **Professor Rachel Slater (Wolverhampton University) (TBC):** Discusses the emerging influence of local actors in building adaptable social protection systems in crisis settings.
- **Dr. Dolf te Lintelo (IDS) and Dr. Nadine Khayat (American University of Beirut):** Examine Lebanon's economic collapse and fragmented support systems, exploring how inconsistent aid distribution in Beirut's poorest informal neighborhoods shapes urban survival and impacts vulnerable populations.
- **Dr. Philip Proudfoot (IDS):** Challenges assumptions around Lebanon's fiscal crisis and sectarian clientelism, finding instead that fragmented, party-led social protection regimes reinforce the country's fractured social contract through a relational-clientelist dynamic.
- **Dr. Louisa Seferis (Independent Consultant):** Highlights qualitative work from the BASIC research program with frontline staff in the KRI, revealing how locally provided social assistance can either reinforce or disrupt social protection reforms, offering crucial insights into the design and delivery of aid in the absence of government-led programs.
- **Abeer Alabsi (Independent Consultant):** Explores Yemen's national and local capacities for social protection, demonstrating resilience in adapting to deliver essential support despite extreme challenges.

- **Cynthia Saghir (CAMELEON):** Addresses the pressing need for shock-responsive social protection systems amidst Lebanon’s current crises and rising violence.

Presenters will shed light on how national and sub-national responses not only shape and sustain social protection ecosystems across the Arab region, proposing pathways for future policy that recognize the indispensable roles of local actors, community dynamics, and the adaptive power of social assistance systems. This high-level discussion will deepen the understanding of the nuanced roles that local and national actors play within these complex systems and inspire policies that harness these insights for sustainable, inclusive social protection frameworks. The session will provide a platform for discussing the design, financing, and efficacy of social protection systems capable of meeting urgent needs in fragile settings.

Following the presentations, there will be opportunities to discuss the findings and their implications for building and protecting social assistance and protection systems in contexts of conflict, displacement, and crises.

PANEL 1	Frontline Resilience: Local Accountability and Adaptive Social Protection in Crisis Contexts
9:00-9:05	Introductory Remarks: Rachel Sabates-Wheeler , IDS/ BASIC Research Sarah Anne Rennick , Deputy Director – Arab Reform Initiative
9:05- 10:00	Louisa Seferis & Harem Karem , Frontline perspectives of social assistance in the KRI: what can we learn from local accountability for social protection reform?" Rachel Slater (TBC) Abeer Alabsi , How national and local Yemeni capacities for social protection have survived through a decade of war.
10:00-10:07	Siba Mroueh , Researcher at ARI reflects on presentations
10:07-10:30	Q&A from everyone

10:30-10:45 Break

PANEL 2	Social Assistance provisioning in times of crisis: Lebanon
10:45-12:00	Philip Proudfoot , The Politics of Social Assistance in Lebanon: Crisis and the Fragmented Social Contract Dolf te Lintel and Nadine Khayat , Patchworks of provisioning: social assistance and the urbanization of refuge in Lebanon Cynthia Saghir , Shock-responsive social protection in the midst of the war in Lebanon” Hart Ford
12:00-12:07	Serene Dardari , Communications Director at ARI reflects on presentations
12:07- 12:30	Q&A from everyone