

③ Global issues and debates

3.1 Coverage, spend and systems

Coverage and spend

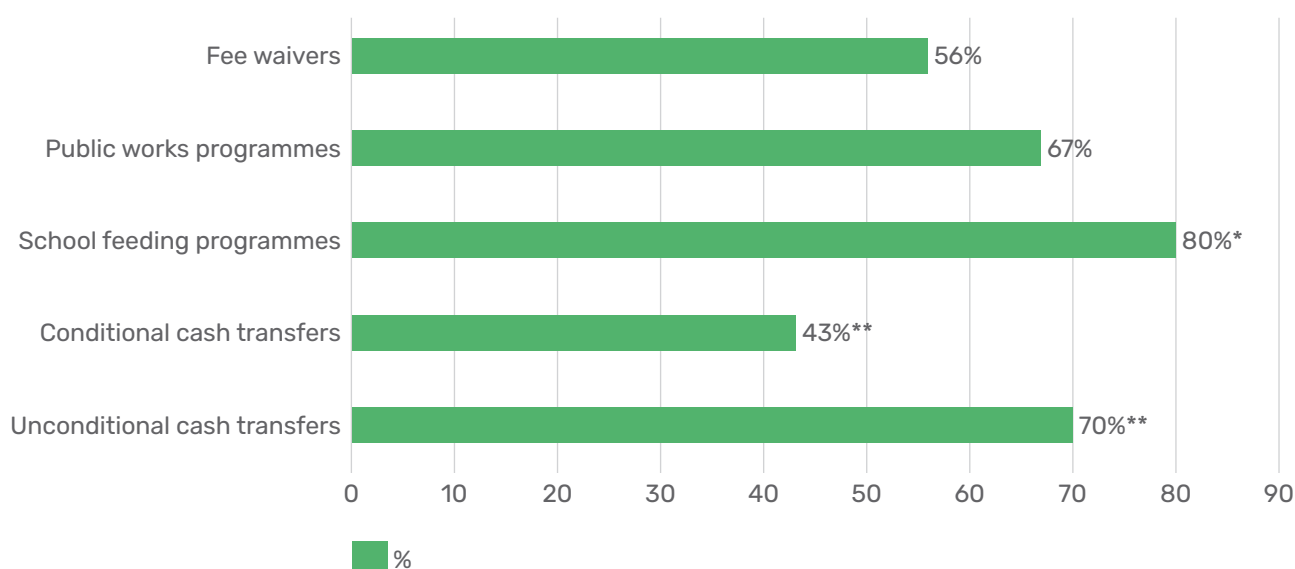
The last 20 years have seen a huge increase in social protection programmes, both in the number of programmes and number of countries with programmes ([Gentilini et al., 2014](#)). Much of this expansion is accounted for by social assistance and particularly cash transfer programmes ([Bastagli et al., 2016](#): 5; [de Groot et al., 2015](#): 4).

Today, most countries have a diverse set of social assistance programmes. Figure 2 shows percentage of countries with fee waivers, public works programmes, school feeding programmes, and conditional and unconditional cash transfers. In addition to these schemes, an estimated 114 countries have introduced old-age social pensions, the latest by Myanmar in 2017 ([HelpAge Social Pensions Database](#)⁴). Growth in programme adoption has been especially high in Africa,

where 40 countries out of 48 in sub-Saharan Africa had an unconditional cash transfer (using a definition including social pension)⁵ by 2014, double the 2010 total ([World Bank, 2015](#): 7).

Globally, low- and middle-income countries spend an average of 1.5% of GDP on social assistance programmes ([World Bank, 2018b](#): 1). There are variances between regions and individual countries: countries spend an average of 2.2% of GDP in Europe and Central Asia, 1.5% in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, 1.1% in East Asia and Pacific, 1.0% in the Middle East and North Africa, and 0.9% in South Asia ([ibid.](#): 16). The prominence of cash transfers in social assistance is also evident in spending patterns. Globally, cash transfers (including unconditional and conditional cash transfers and social pensions) account for more than half of total social assistance spending ([ibid.](#): 27) with many countries spending more on these programmes over time ([ibid.](#): 1).

Figure 2. Percentage of the ASPIRE⁶ database countries with social assistance programmes



Notes:

* Original text states 'more than 80 per cent'.

** The conditional and unconditional cash transfers are non-contributory schemes. The ASPIRE definition of unconditional cash transfers includes: poverty-targeted cash transfers, last-resort programmes; family, children, orphan allowance, including orphans and vulnerable children benefits; non-contributory funeral grants, burial allowances; emergency cash support, including support to refugees and returning migrants; public charity, including *zakat*. This category does not include social pensions ([World Bank, 2018b](#): 7).

Social pensions are not included in this figure.

Source: Authors' own, based on data from [World Bank, 2018b](#): 1.

⁴ Downloaded 5 June 2019.

⁵ Sometimes studies include social pensions as one type of unconditional cash transfer; other studies put social pensions in a separate category from unconditional cash transfers. This report has tried to make the definitions used by each study clear, where studies provide the information.

⁶ ASPIRE: World Bank Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity.

Looking at broader social protection, pensions for older women and men are the most widespread social protection instrument, with the highest coverage (ILO, 2017: 75). Globally, 68% of people above retirement age receive a pension, either contributory or non-contributory (ibid.). However, there are large regional variations: '[C]overage rates in higher income countries are close to 100 per cent, while in sub-Saharan Africa they are only 22.7 per cent, and in Southern Asia 23.6 per cent' (ibid.: 79).

Old-age social pensions (i.e. non-contributory) have substantially increased in the past two decades: 'Today almost all Latin American countries have them, whereas Sub-Saharan Africa economies have some of the largest old-age social pensions systems in terms of the share of the elderly population covered' (World Bank, 2018b: 73).

Other schemes have low coverage globally (e.g. globally, only 21.8% of the unemployed receive unemployment benefits), with wide variations by region and country (e.g. only 5.6% of the unemployed in Africa receive contributory or non-contributory unemployment benefits, compared with 22.5% in Asia) (ILO, 2017: 49).

Gaps

There remain significant gaps in social protection coverage around the world. The ILO (2017: xxix) highlights 'a significant underinvestment in social protection, particularly in Africa, Asia and the Arab States... Only 45 per cent of the global population are effectively covered by at least one [contributory or non-contributory] social protection benefit, while the remaining 55 per cent – as many as 4 billion people – are left unprotected' (ibid.: xxix). Looking at contributory and non-contributory programmes, coverage varies by vulnerable group (68% of older people globally are effectively covered by at least one benefit compared to 35% of children and 28% of people with severe disabilities) and by region (only 18% of people in Africa to a high of 84% of people in Europe and Central Asia – excluding health protection which is not covered under SDG indicator 1.3.1) (ibid.: 167, 123, 158).

For non-contributory social assistance programmes, in low-income countries only 18% of the poorest quintile are reached by social assistance interventions (World Bank, 2018b: 1). Moreover, social assistance schemes in low-income countries only cover a limited proportion of the active population, hindering the potential positive effects on economic development and productivity (ILO, 2017: 123).

Systems

More recently, efforts have focused on building and strengthening integrated and comprehensive social protection systems, moving away from fragmented individual programmes. A social protection system can be considered at three levels: '(i) the sector (mandates, policies, regulations etc.); (ii) individual programmes; (iii) delivery [or administrative systems] underpinning the programmes (databases, payment mechanisms, etc.)' (O'Brien et al., 2018: ii).

There is broad agreement in the literature that social protection expansion should aim towards integrating individual programmes into a holistic state-led social protection system. Social protection systems figure prominently in the SDGs: Goal 1 to End Poverty, Target 1.3 calls for the implementation of 'nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and vulnerable'⁷

This move towards systems thinking has contributed to a large increase in the number of countries with a national social protection policy or strategy (ILO, 2017: 4). The ILO notes that 'most countries have in place social protection schemes anchored in national legislation covering all or most policy areas of social protection, although in some cases these cover only a minority of their population' (ibid.: 4).

However, extending effective coverage has significantly lagged behind legal coverage, primarily due to limited resources (ILO, 2018: 1), as well as implementation, coordination and capacity constraints (ILO, 2017: 4), and political factors. Many programmes for those living in poverty continue to be short term, delivered as pilot programmes for limited geographic areas, and lacking a stable legal and financial foundation (ibid.: 4; UN DESA, 2018: xxi). These contribute to improving beneficiaries' situations but are less able to provide predictable and transparent benefits (ILO, 2017: 4).

Building social protection systems tends to develop progressively and sequentially (ibid.: 4). While there are many possible pathways to a comprehensive social protection system, many countries have introduced programmes in this order: employment injury; old-age pensions, disability and survivors' benefits; sickness, health and maternity coverage; and finally, children and family and unemployment benefits (ibid.). In terms of population coverage, countries have tended to prioritise two groups 'at opposite ends of the income scale': introducing contributory social insurance for public and private sector employees; and establishing

⁷ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/poverty/> (Accessed 9 April 2019).

non-contributory (mostly tax-financed) social assistance to cover the needs of people living in poverty (*ibid.*).

Scale-up often means moving from donor-funded pilot schemes to formal adoption of the concept as public policy by governments, with recurrent costs covered by national resources (*Ellis, 2012; UNDP, 2016: 74*). However, many donor-funded demonstration initiatives have failed to transition to government-owned programmes (*UNDP, 2016: 74*). Some key considerations are for donors and government to collaborate in line with a country's development objectives, identify national resources at the start of piloting social protection interventions; and support countries' start-up costs of systemic social protection (*ibid.*). Donor funding can usefully be used to 'monitor, evaluate, improve and scale' government-driven programmes as well as 'to establish and facilitate coordination mechanisms among government ministries, civil society and international and bilateral donors' (*ibid.*). As scale-up is a political process, while the focus has tended to be on technical solutions, strategies to generate political will and commitment are important (*IATT, 2008: 6*). **See Section 3.3: Political economy.**

Given continuing social protection coverage and adequacy shortcomings, donors, agencies and governments are collaborating to support building inclusive social protection systems (*ILO, 2017; UN DESA, 2018; UNDP, 2016*).

In 2015, the World Bank and ILO issued a joint plan of action on universal social protection (with the Universal Social Protection 2030 Initiative (USP2030) launched in 2016) to support nationally defined systems of policies and programmes that 'provide equitable access to all people and protect them throughout their lives against poverty and risks to their livelihoods and well-being'.⁸ **See Section 1.3: Analytical concepts.** USP2030 partners aim 'to work together to increase the number of countries that provide universal social protection', including through 'coordinating country support to strengthen national social protection systems, knowledge development to document country experience and provide evidence on financing options and advocacy for integrating universal social protection'.⁹ Each national USP system will follow common fundamental characteristics ('the need for equitable access, a nationally led approach and the capacity for expansion') but each will be different according to national contexts, such as the existing level of social protection coverage and political and fiscal capacity to expand (*Ulrichs & White-Kaba, 2019: 12*). To facilitate progressive expansion to USP, social protection systems 'need in-built flexibility' (*ibid.*). Key questions on the way are: Who is covered (the breadth of coverage)? Which risks are covered (the scope of services)? Who pays for social protection and how much (the depth of financial protection)? (*ibid.*: 12–13). See Figure 3.

Figure 3. The USP cube: Progressive realisation of the three dimensions (policy choices) of universal social protection



Source: *Ulrichs and White-Kaba, 2019: 12*, reproduced with permission.

⁸ Universal Social Protection 2030 website: <https://www.usp2030.org/gimi/USP2030.action> (Accessed 4 March 2019).

⁹ *Ibid.*

Key texts

- > UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). (2018). *Promoting inclusion through social protection. Report on the world social situation 2018*. United Nations.

This report looks at the contribution of social protection to social inclusion for seven, often disadvantaged, groups: children, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, international migrants, ethnic and racial minorities, and indigenous peoples.

- > World Bank. (2018b). *The state of social safety nets 2018*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

This report examines global trends in the social safety net/social assistance coverage, spending, and programme performance, based on the World Bank Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity (ASPIRE) updated database. The report documents the main social safety net programmes that exist globally and their use to alleviate poverty and to build shared prosperity. It focuses on the role of old-age social pensions, and what makes social protection systems adaptive to various shocks.

- > ILO. (2017). *World social protection report 2017–19: Universal social protection to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals*. Geneva: ILO.

This report provides a global overview of recent trends in social protection systems, including social protection floors. It presents a broad range of global, regional and country data on social protection coverage, benefits, and public expenditure. Following a life cycle approach, the report analyses progress on universal social protection coverage with a particular focus on achieving the globally agreed 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

- > UNDP. (2016). *Leaving no one behind. A social protection primer for practitioners*. New York: United Nations Development Programme.

How can social protection play a transformative role to address the structural constraints impeding sustainable development and support the achievement of wellbeing for all? This primer is a practical resource on how to strengthen social protection to address the systemic and interlinked objectives of the sustainable development agenda. It provides guidance on how social protection systems can strengthen coherence among economic, environmental, and social objectives, and how to embed social protection into governments' priorities and programmes.


See also:

- > Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection (USP2030). (2019, 5 February). *Together to achieve universal social protection by 2030 (USP2030) – A call to action*. Geneva.

- > Beegle, K., Coudouel, A., & Monsalve, E. (Eds.). (2018). *Realising the full potential of social safety nets in Africa*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

- > Garcia, M., & Moore, C. (2012). *The cash dividend: The rise of cash transfer programs in sub-Saharan Africa*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Other resources

-  Building universal social protection systems. (2019). High Level Conference of the Global Partnership of USP2030. (1hr:10:44)

3.2 Financing, affordability and fiscal space

Issues of financing social protection, costs of individual programmes and systems, and the interface of social protection with taxation systems are widely debated. The social protection floors approach to building integrated social protection systems over time highlights the importance of increasing fiscal space, to create secure and sustainable financing over the long term (Harris, 2013).

Costs of social protection

In a recent report, the ILO estimates that 'the cost of a full set of benefits¹⁰ for the 57 low-income and lower middle-income countries ranges from 0.3 per cent of GDP for Mongolia to 9.8 per cent of GDP for Sierra Leone – with an average cost of 4.2 per cent of GDP' (Ortiz et al., 2017b: xi). This compares with current average spend of 1.5% of GDP on social assistance programmes in sub-Saharan Africa and 0.9% in South Asia (World Bank, 2018b: 16). See [Section 3.1: Coverage, spend and systems](#).

On the basis of this analysis, the ILO concludes 'some countries have the fiscal space to develop social protection floors', while others will need to extend coverage and benefits gradually, combined with contributory social insurance schemes (Ortiz et al., 2017b: xi). The ILO report stresses the 'time is ripe' to implement nationally appropriate social protection floors, noting for example that countries such as India, the Philippines, Morocco, Jamaica and Sudan 'are wealthier than Denmark in 1892 when it established universal social protection' (ibid.: xii).

¹⁰ Calculations are 'based on a comparable set of cash transfers, comprising of: (i) allowances for all children and orphans; (ii) maternity benefits for all women with newborns; (iii) benefits for all persons with severe disabilities, and (iv) universal old-age pensions', and include 3% administrative costs for all universal benefits (Ortiz et al., 2017b: 2).

Policy issues on financing social protection

With the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (outcome of the 2015 Third International Conference on Financing for Development), UN member states promised to provide ‘fiscally sustainable and nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, with a focus on those furthest below the poverty line and the vulnerable, persons with disabilities, indigenous persons, children, youth and other persons’ (UN, 2015: 6).

However, given the low tax base and high levels of informality in many low- and middle-income countries, as well as the significant resources required to finance social protection programmes and systems, there are significant challenges regarding raising revenues in a sustainable way. Critical policy issues include designing economically sustainable systems and harnessing ‘the important role of social contributions as a source of financing, complementing general taxation’ (ILO, 2018: 2).

Sources of funding

Social protection is funded through government, individual/households, employers, and development assistance. The ILO finds that a ‘combination of non-contributory and contributory mechanisms has proven to represent the most effective manner to extend coverage, typically by combining social insurance contributions, and general taxation for universal benefits (e.g. child or disability benefits) or means-tested social assistance... [for] vulnerable populations lacking contributory capacity’ (ILO, 2018: 8).

Government: Financing for social protection generally comes from the budget, foremost from tax revenues (IATF, 2017: 24) with some support from donors depending on the level of national resources available. Options that governments can explore to expand fiscal space for social protection are:

- *‘[To] increase the overall size of a country’s budget: (i) increasing tax revenues; (ii) expanding social security coverage and contributory revenues; (iii) lobbying for increased aid and transfers; (iv) eliminating illicit financial flows; (v) borrowing or restructuring debt, and (vi) adopting a more accommodative macroeconomic framework.’*
- *‘[R]edirecting existing resources from one area to... social protection: (vii) re-allocating public expenditures, and; (viii) tapping into fiscal and foreign exchange reserves’ (Ortiz et al., 2017a: 1).*

Sustainable financing at the country level also requires a good understanding of the political economy and why certain spending decisions are made. This includes consideration of how the projected costs of social

protection relate to national government spending priorities and long-term financing commitments. Two recent studies by the United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER) highlight that while fiscal capacity is required for social protection resource allocation in this area, institutions, ideology and politics also play an important role (Murshed et al., 2017; Seekings, 2017).

Individuals/households: The second largest source of social protection financing is out-of-pocket expenses paid by service users, but this mainly applies to health expenses (Barrientos, 2007). People may choose between a number of options for financing social protection: investment in human capital (self-protection), savings, and insurance (ibid.). Micro-savings may be an appropriate way to self-fund as they are effective in small losses-high frequency contingencies although, if microfinance institutions make savings compulsory and discourage easy access to withdrawals, they may provide only limited social protection (ibid.).

Employers: Employers’ and workers’ contributions play a critical role in financing social insurance schemes (ILO, 2018: 6). In higher-income countries, social insurance often covers most of the population, with non-contributory (universal or means-tested) interventions for the poor, while in poorer countries, ‘poverty-targeted social assistance programmes tend to play a relatively larger role, though benefits tend to be low, with social insurance providing more adequate benefits’ (ibid.). Contributory schemes tend to ‘guarantee protection in the case of specific risks or contingencies, such as unemployment, sickness, maternity, disability, employment injury or old age’ (UNDP, 2016: 34). Often these schemes include a non-contributory element to distribute benefits more equitably and cover people with low incomes, for example, through within-scheme redistribution or partial funding from general taxation sources through the government budget (ibid.). See [Section 2.2: Social insurance](#).

Development assistance: Donors continue to have an important role in providing finance for social protection in low-income countries. There is a consensus that this is within the context of moving towards domestic financing of social protection costs, including by funding and support of social protection systems rather than just supporting individual programmes. Moreover, there will be circumstances (e.g. after a shock) when countries may not be able to cover their social protection needs out of their own resources and international support will be required (IATF, 2017: 25). However, the ILO 2018 baseline on social protection in development aid reported that ‘the levels of ODA allocated to social protection reflect the relatively low priority given to this development area’: social protection assistance accounts for 0.84% of DAC

countries' total disbursed ODA (ILO, 2018: 4). In 2015, 'the three most important recipients of social protection ODA (in terms of their participation in GDP) were Rwanda, the West Bank and Gaza Strip and Malawi (at between 0.64 per cent of GDP and 2.3 per cent of GDP)' (ibid.: 4–5).

Taxation

There is increasing awareness that issues of taxation and social protection should be considered together (Bastagli, 2015). On the other hand, 'tax revenue levels and "mix" matter... for levels of revenues available for social protection spending and for its sustainability over time' (ibid.: vi). A true assessment of the distributional effects of social protection and the extent to which social protection reduces poverty can only be done by looking at the combined effect of taxes and transfers (Hirvonen et al., 2016).

Efforts to support domestic social protection spending are increasingly looking at options to grow taxation revenue (Bastagli, 2015: iv). The Inter-agency Task Force (IATF, 2017: 24) notes that 'Building synergies between the social protection and tax systems can strengthen the social contract between citizen and state, as expansion of the tax base coincides with provision of benefits.' Compared with other social protection financing options (e.g. expenditure reallocation and donor support), the advantages of taxation include 'the potential for tax systems to promote government accountability and, in turn, improved service provision and citizens' willingness to pay taxes' (Bastagli, 2015: vi). At the same time, 'there is scope to extend contributory social protection and tackle distinctive "revenue gaps" related to tax exemptions and incentives, the undertaxation of... high net-worth individuals, and tax avoidance and evasion' (ibid.).

Studies that consider the effects of social protection on poverty and inequality also increasingly take account of the role that taxation plays. While transfers may be effective in redistributing income and thereby reducing poverty, such effects are undermined and possibly reversed if those at the lower end of the income distribution are disproportionately affected by taxes such as VAT or income tax (Higgins & Lustig, 2016; Hirvonen et al., 2016). Studies of the joint distributional effects of social protection and taxation in low- and middle-income countries are limited but increasing.

Key texts

> Ortiz, I., Cummins, M., & Karunanethy, K. (2017a). *Fiscal space for social protection and the SDGs: Options to expand social investments in 187 countries* (ESS Working Paper 48). Geneva: International Labour Office.

This paper offers eight options that should be explored to expand fiscal space and generate resources to achieve the SDGs, realise human rights, and invest in women and children. It provides examples of where these options have been applied by governments around the world.

> Ortiz, I., Durán-Valverde, F., Pal, K., Behrendt, C., & Acuña-Ulate, A. (2017b). *Universal social protection floors: Costing estimates and affordability in 57 lower income countries* (ESS Working Paper 58). Geneva: ILO.

This paper presents the results of costing universal social protection floors in 34 lower middle-income, and 23 low-income countries, consisting of: (i) allowances for all children and all orphans; (ii) maternity benefits for all women with newborns; (iii) benefits for all persons with severe disabilities; and (iv) universal old-age pensions.

> Bastagli, F. (2015). *Bringing taxation into social protection analysis and planning* (ODI Working Paper 421). London: ODI.

'This paper contributes to efforts to include tax considerations in social protection analysis and design by discussing the key methodological issues in carrying out joint distributional analysis, reviewing the evidence on the incidence and distributional impact of taxes and transfers and discussing alternative tax revenue sources and their implications for social protection financing and sustainability' (abstract).

See also:

> Coady, D. (2018). *Enhancing domestic tax capacity is essential for strengthening social protection and developing human capital*. *Finance & Development*, 55(4).

> Bolton, L. (2017). *Innovative financing methods for social protection* (K4D Helpdesk Report). Brighton: IDS.

> Murshed, S. M., Badiuzzaman, M., & Pulok, M. H. (2017). *Fiscal capacity and social protection expenditure in developing nations* (WIDER Working Paper 2017/60). Helsinki: UNU-WIDER.

> Seekings, J. (2017). *'Affordability' and the political economy of social protection in contemporary Africa* (WIDER Working Paper 2017/43). Helsinki: UNU-WIDER.

> Higgins, S., & Lustig, N. (2016). *Can a poverty-reducing and progressive tax and transfer system hurt the poor?*. *Journal of Development Economics*, 122: 63–75.

Other resources



Financing gender-responsive social protection. (2019). ODI & DFID.



Strong safety nets strong growth. (2019). International Monetary Fund. (16m:28)

3.3 Political economy

There is growing recognition that institutions, politics and ideologies shape national social protection agendas, policies and appetite for resource allocation (**Lavers & Hickey, 2015; Murshed et al., 2017; Seekings, 2017**).

Social protection has several areas of political debate and ideological contestation. Targeting is a common debate; for example, the means-tested cash transfer for children in Mongolia was later changed to a universal child benefit as the government adopted more populist and socialist values (**Slater & Farrington, 2009**). This programme has now become targeted again.¹¹ For further information on promotion of universal social protection, see **Section 1.3: Analytical concepts** and **Section 3.1: Coverage, spend and systems**.

Dependency is a second area of debate. Some governments, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, choose public works programmes for the working age poor instead of unconditional cash transfers and limit the programme duration, as this is seen as preventing dependency on handouts (**McCord, 2012**). Governments and donors are also attracted to graduation programmes due to their alignment with broader development goals, with concomitant risk of 'excessive political pressure to demonstrate "success"' (**Devereux & Ulrichs, 2015: 145**).

Meanwhile, pensions are historically popular for political decision-makers and the public alike, due to 'their simplicity, transparency and obvious fairness' (**HelpAge International, 2004: 6**). Moreover, as well as the benefits for the individual older poor people, social pensions are seen to benefit families (with the pension reducing the 'drain' on household expenditures by older people's medicines) and society (pension incomes invested in productive enterprises supports economic growth) (**Wening Handayani & Babajanian, 2012: 3**). In Asia, social pensions have tended 'to move from targeted to universal benefits because of lower social and economic costs, greater political support, reduced corruption, and better integration in retirement savings systems' (**ibid.: 5**). On the other hand, a review of the costs and benefits of social pensions in sub-Saharan Africa finds that universal social pensions' expanded coverage 'comes with a cost', with countries that have these large

pensions (e.g. Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia) spending most of their social protection funds on them (**Guven & Leite, 2016: 11–12**). For countries with an aging demographic, this will be a growing fiscal challenge (**ibid.: 12**).

In practice, how these debates are resolved depends on fiscal space, public support, and the political power of the different ministries and others involved. Public support and acceptability is a key factor in social protection policy decisions. Provision of public goods through social protection can increase popularity among recipient voters (**Zucco, 2011**), generating immediate political returns. These may potentially alienate wealthy or higher tax payers if they are excluded from social protection benefits (**Slater & Farrington, 2009**). Different factors affect different groups' support for social protection, such as who pays, who benefits, and the perceived value or threat of the programme.

Key texts

- > **Lavers, T., & Hickey, S. (2015). *Investigating the political economy of social protection expansion in Africa: At the intersection of transnational ideas and domestic politics* (ESID Working Paper 47). Manchester: Effective States and Inclusive Development, University of Manchester.**
This paper outlines a conceptual and methodological 'political settlements' framework for investigating the politics of social protection, with a particular focus on explaining the variation in progress made by African countries in adopting and implementing social protection programmes.
- > **Hujo, K., & Cook, S. (2012). Political economy of social pensions in Asia. In Handayani, Sri W., & Babajanian, B. (Eds.), *Social protection for older persons: Social pensions in Asia* (pp. 11–59).**
This chapter explores why countries in Asia have adopted social pension programmes and which factors have influenced their design. It provides an understanding of the politics of social pension reform in Asia and identifies policy lessons. There are clear differences among countries, but there are some points of convergence over which conditions are conducive to the introduction of pensions: robust affordability studies; linkages with poverty reduction and long-term development strategies; and political support.
- > **McCord, A. (2012). *The politics of social protection: Why are public works programmes so popular with governments and donors?* (Background Note). London: ODI.**
This background note is an initial exploration of the political economy and reasons for the popularity of

¹¹ The programme was targeted to the lowest 60% in January 2018 due to delay in IMF loan disbursement, then raised to 80% in April 2018 (**ILO–UNICEF, 2019: 30**). ILO–UNICEF notes that 'while still technically targeted, this latest update essentially made every child in the [proxy means testing] database eligible to receive the benefit, yet around 105,000 children, or 10 per cent of the total, are still excluded...' (**ibid.**).

PWPs to promote social protection and employment in low-income and fragile states. The research indicates that the expected benefits of PWPs are not necessarily based on evidence of positive impacts and outcomes, and decisions to implement these programmes are rather based on political choices. Political economy analysis is a useful tool for analysing these decision-making processes.

See also:

- > **Murshed, S. M., Badiuzzaman, M., & Pulok, M. H. (2017). *Fiscal capacity and social protection expenditure in developing nations* (WIDER Working Paper 2017/60). Helsinki: UNU-WIDER.**
- > **Seekings, J. (2017). *Affordability and the political economy of social protection in contemporary Africa* (WIDER Working Paper 2017/43). Helsinki: UNU-WIDER.**
- > **Rao, S. (2011). *Examples of successful fuel subsidy removal* (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report 754). Birmingham: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.**
- > **Haider, H. (2010). *Political economy of cash transfers* (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report 704). Birmingham: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.**

Other resources



***A podcast on our latest findings on social protection in Africa.* Lavers, T., Hickey, S., & McCord, A. (2016). Effective States and Inclusive Development (ESID). (33m11)**

3.4 State-building and citizenship

Social protection may have potential to build state institutions and contribute to social cohesion by strengthening the state–citizen ‘contract’, promoting ‘social inclusion, integration and greater accountability’ (UNDP, 2016: 20). This relationship is widely discussed but is complex and there is no rigorous evidence to support the link between social protection, state-building, and social cohesion (Carpenter et al., 2012). A Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) study finds that ‘the simple receipt of a payment was generally not associated with changes in perception of government, except for the odd case’, likely due to more specific factors colouring perceptions (e.g. the low value of payments combined with irregular delivery and difficulty of accessing payments) (Nixon & Mallett, 2018: 18).

Most of the literature on this topic comes from fragile and conflict-affected contexts, where there can be a post-conflict window of opportunity for state-building

and where social protection may play an important role. For example, analysis of civil unrest in 14 states in India between 1973 and 1999 found redistributive transfers were ‘a more successful and cost-effective means to reduce civil unrest’ than policing (Justino, 2011: 3).

Hickey (2011) sets out some of the challenges and risks for donors in supporting social protection from a social contract perspective, looking in particular at the experience in Africa. The challenge is how donors can engage ‘with issues of sovereignty, ownership and working in more politically attuned ways with regard to country systems, political discourses and existing policy channels’ (Hickey, 2011: 18). The risk is that donors damage existing social contracts for social protection – which ‘are fundamentally concerned with the relationship between national governments and their citizens’ (ibid.: 16). Meanwhile donors are in ‘a structurally difficult position from which to promote the types of political changes required to catalyse or strengthen social contracts and have a deeply problematic track record in this regard’ (ibid.).

Recent research explores the potential of social protection to be provided and accessed in ways grounded in a rights-based vision of social justice, and thereby uphold the provision of basic social rights to all (Sabates-Wheeler et al., 2017: 6; Devereux et al., 2011). However, most social protection provision, in particular in low-income and aid-dependent countries, continues to be income-focused, discretionary, and often conditioned (rather than entitlement-based), with recipients continuing to view participation as a gift rather than a right (Sabates-Wheeler et al., 2017: 6, 39). To transition to justice-based social protection, catalysts can include a strong civil society, donor support for setting up social protection institutions, activism to help mobilise citizens to claim their rights, or accountability mechanisms such as grievance mechanisms or social audits (ibid.). To address the different types of citizen concern that social protection programmes can elicit, a suite of collective and individual social accountability mechanisms is ‘a better starting point for the design of an effective strategy’ than a single mechanism (Ayliffe et al., 2017: 6).

Key texts

- > **Ayliffe, T., Aslam, G., & Schjødt, R. (2017). *Social accountability in the delivery of social protection* (Final Research Report). Orpington: Development Pathways.**
A report on the findings of an investigation into the potential of social accountability in the social protection sector for improving service delivery and state–society relations. It includes a review of the

global literature and four country case studies. Key lessons include grounding social accountability in social protection in contextual analysis, and identifying any binding constraints, while noting that state support is as important as citizen action for successful social accountability but has not received as much attention. Other lessons are outlined in the report.

- > **Nixon, H., & Mallett, R. (2017). *Service delivery, public perceptions and state legitimacy: Findings from the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium*. London: Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium.** One of a series of synthesis reports produced by the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC). 'Focusing on sub-national regions of eight fragile and conflict-affected countries – Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nepal, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sri Lanka and Uganda – SLRC examined the links between people's experiences with service delivery and their relationships with the state' (p. v). Key conclusions are that there is 'an important role for the underlying narratives about and expectations of the state in influencing how people respond to services', with legitimacy 'better understood as a relational quality rather than a characteristic of a given organisation or institution' (p. vi).

- > **Sabates-Wheeler, R., Abdulai, A. G., Wilmink, N., de Groot, R., & Spadafora, T. R. (2017). *Linking social rights to active citizenship for the most vulnerable: The role of rights and accountability in the 'making' and 'shaping' of social protection* (Innocenti Working Paper 2017-14). Florence: UNICEF Office of Research.**

This paper considers what a citizen-based approach can contribute to social protection. It looks at how social protection can be provided to address vulnerability and uphold basic social rights. The paper finds that currently most social protection programmes in low-income and aid-dependent countries 'remain income-focused, discretionary, and conditioned', shaped by perceptions of "deserving" and "undeserving" poor' (p. 6).

- > **Hickey, S. (2011). *The politics of social protection: What do we get from a 'social contract' approach* (Working Paper 216). Manchester: Chronic Poverty Research Centre.**

This paper identifies growing calls to reframe the politics of poverty reduction, and of social protection in particular, in terms of extending the 'social contract' to the poorest groups. It cautions that different ideological approaches to social contract thinking pose dangers and difficult decisions to approaching social protection from a social contract perspective. The paper sets out the challenges for donors in engaging with issues of sovereignty, ownership, and

working in more politically attuned ways with regard to country systems, political discourses and existing policy channels.

See also:

- > **Samuels, F., Jones, N., with Malachowska, A. (2013). *Holding cash transfers to account: Beneficiary and community perspectives*. London: ODI.**
- > **Barca, V. & Notosusanto, S. (2012). *Review of, and recommendations for, grievance mechanisms for social protection programmes. Final report summary*. Oxford: Oxford Policy Management.**
- > **Devereux, S., McGregor, A., & Sabates-Wheeler, R. (2011). *Introduction: Social protection for social justice*. *IDS Bulletin* 42(6): 1–9.**
- > **Justino, P. (2011). *Carrot or stick? Redistributive transfers versus policing in contexts of civil unrest* (IDS Working Paper 382). Brighton: IDS.**

3.5 Targeting

Targeting refers to any mechanism to identify eligible individuals, households and groups, for the purposes of transferring resources or preferential access to social services (Devereux et al., 2015: 7). 'Popular targeting mechanisms include means testing, proxy means tests, categorical, geographic, community-based, and self-selection' (ibid.: 3).

The foremost rationale for targeting 'is to direct programmes to those who will most benefit' (White, 2017: 145). Targeting may have other aims: to maximise poverty reduction; to ensure no one is 'left behind'; to contain the costs of provision; and to make the most efficient use of resources when faced with budget limits; or for political gains (Devereux et al., 2015: 7–8; Kidd & Althias, 2019: ii). While 'targeting of benefits to those most in need is widely practiced' (Ulrichs & White-Kaba, 2019: 17), there are ongoing debates about targeting approaches – the most cost-effective methods for reaching those most in need – and the appropriate degree of targeting.

Universal social protection includes schemes that aim to reach every citizen passing a basic criterion, often categorical schemes for all people of a certain age (e.g. a social pension where eligibility is only restricted by age and therefore reaches all older citizens) or status (e.g. all children under five years old) (Devereux et al., 2015: 9). A universal basic income would provide benefits to each individual: 'such schemes are rare' (Kidd & Althias, 2019: 6).

Poverty incidence may reach a level at which it is 'not worth the cost of targeting' and investing that money in universal programmes may be preferred (White, 2017: 158; Ulrichs & White-Kaba, 2019: 17). A universal

benefit may be intrinsically self-targeting; for example, if for some beneficiaries the cost of the benefit – such as queuing or participating in a public works programme – is too high and they choose not to take part (White, 2017: 158). Universal programmes ensure all in need are reached and can increase buy-in from all sections of the population (Ulrichs & White-Kaba, 2019: 17). However, few countries can afford to provide social protection to all. The Universal Social Protection 2030 Initiative aims to facilitate countries' progressive expansion of social protection to achieve universal coverage, as 'resources and politics permit' (Devereux, 2016: 14). See [Section 1.3: Analytical concepts](#) and [Section 3.1: Coverage, spend and systems](#).

Given financial limitations, social protection programmes and systems are often targeted to some extent. Options to target social protection include:

- narrow the geographical coverage;
- limit the categories selected (e.g. old-age pension or child grant);
- narrow the category selected;
- direct resources at those living in poverty (by means testing or proxies); or
- use a combination of approaches (e.g. a poverty-targeted child grant).

Narrowing the category involves limiting the age of eligibility or, in the case of disability-specific benefits, selecting those with more severe disabilities. In addition, governments can then choose to restrict the programme further by targeting those living in poverty.

The use of targeting is contested, criticised for both pragmatic (as all targeting mechanisms generate errors and costs) and ethical reasons (as it can lead to 'social divisiveness and perceptions that excluding some people from benefits is socially unjust') (Devereux, 2016: 1; Devereux et al., 2015). Targeting mechanisms face design and implementation difficulties in reaching those that need the assistance most; consequently, some of the most vulnerable can be excluded (UNDP, 2016: 41; Kidd & Althias, 2019). Typically, interventions using proxy means testing¹² feature 'inherent 30–40% inclusion and exclusion errors' (World Bank, n.d.), while poverty data collection and analysis to inform targeting, and keeping this information up to date, can be expensive (Ulrichs & White-Kaba, 2019: 17). In addition, targeting can potentially increase social tension (Devereux et al., 2015: 34). Evidence on the impact of broader targeting on social cohesion is limited, with mixed findings. Ellis (2012: 212) finds that universal

(or categorical) transfers are socially popular. However, Babajanian (2012: 31) highlights that 'Social categorical targeting in fragile states can exacerbate social divisions and inequalities by including specific groups and leaving out others (e.g. in Sierra Leone and Liberia).'

Key texts

- > White, H. (2017). *Effective targeting of social programmes: An overview of issues*. *Journal of Development Effectiveness*, 9(2), 145–161.
This paper reviews the issues involved with targeting. It notes that the choice between a universal benefit and a targeted scheme is ultimately a political decision, but sets out some technical criteria to take into account when making this decision.
 - > Devereux, S. (2016). *Is targeting ethical?*. *Global Social Policy*, 16(2), 166–181.
This article examines 'targeting' versus 'universalism' debates, drawing on three principles of redistributive justice – equality, equity, and need. It concludes that 'social assistance should be targeted at those who need it, especially when budgets are constrained, moving progressively towards "categorical universalism" when resources and politics permit'.
 - > Devereux, S., Masset, E., Sabates-Wheeler, R., Samson, M., Rivas, A.-M., & te Lintelo, D. (2015). *Evaluating the targeting effectiveness of social transfers: A literature review* (IDS Working Paper 460). Brighton: IDS.
This paper reviews empirical evidence on targeting mechanisms from a range of social protection programmes. It considers evidence on errors (inclusion and exclusion, by eligibility and by poverty) and associated costs (administrative, private, social, psychosocial, incentive-based and political).
- See also:
- > Kidd, S., & Athias, D. (2019). *Hit and miss: An assessment of targeting effectiveness in social protection* (Working Paper). Orpington: Development Pathways.
 - > Ellis, F. (2012). 'We are all poor here': Economic difference, social divisiveness and targeting cash transfers in sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of Development Studies* 48(2), 201–214.
 - > Coady, D., Grosh, M. E., & Hoddinott, J. (2004). *Targeting of transfers in developing countries: Review of lessons and experience (Vol. 1)*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

¹² Proxy means testing is a targeting methodology that uses 'observable characteristics of the household or its members to estimate their incomes or consumption, when other income data (salary slips, tax returns) are unavailable or unreliable' (World Bank, n.d.).

Other resources



Kidd, S. (2016, 9 February). Social protection: Universal provision is more effective than poverty targeting. Ideas for Development (ID4D).



Yemtsov, R. (2016, 16 August). Social protection: Universal and poverty targeting approaches are not in contradiction. Ideas for Development (ID4D).

3.6 Conditionality

Conditionality (also called conditions and co-responsibilities) require beneficiaries to undertake certain actions, such as ensuring that their children are immunised or attending school, or taking part in parenting classes, in return for receiving their transfers (**World Bank, 2018b**: 7). The aim is ‘to reduce both short-term food insecurity and the long-term intergenerational transmission of poverty and vulnerability’ by developing human capital (**HLPE, 2012: 14**; **World Bank, 2018**: 7). Non-compliance is often met with punitive action (i.e. the transfers are withheld) or with non-punitive responses such as referral or coaching. The former are referred to as hard conditions whereas the latter are referred to as soft conditions. Conditionalities should take into consideration local priorities, supply-side constraints (e.g. availability and quality of education and health services) and local capacity to deliver and monitor (**UNDP, 2016**: 62) whether beneficiaries are capable of fulfilling conditions.

Regionally, Latin America and the Caribbean has the largest conditional cash transfer budget share – at around 21% of its total social safety net budget, followed closely by sub-Saharan Africa (at around 18%) (**World Bank, 2018**: 27). Conditionalities should be based on local priorities and consider supply-side constraints (e.g. existing education and health services, or local capacity to deliver and monitor) (**UNDP, 2016**: 62), as well as whether beneficiaries are capable of fulfilling conditions.

Anecdotal or outdated evidence is often cited that beneficiaries do not use cash ‘wisely’, a narrative that may affect the political and social acceptability of using conditional versus unconditional cash transfers (**The Transfer Project, 2017**: 1). However, evidence on both UCTs and CCTs shows that beneficiaries use cash in positive ways and mostly in areas that conditions encourage, including health care, education and food. Recent research on large-scale government UCTs in sub-Saharan Africa provides ‘ample evidence’ to refute common misperceptions associated with cash transfer programming, including that cash transfers: ‘(1) induce higher spending on alcohol or tobacco, (2) are fully consumed (rather than invested), (3) create dependency (reduce participation in productive activities),

(4) increase fertility, (5) lead to negative community-level economic impacts (including price distortion and inflation), and (6) are fiscally unsustainable’ (*ibid.*: 1).

There is an intensive debate about the desirability and effectiveness of conditionality. Rigorous evidence is emerging on both sides of the conditionality debate, with no conclusive lessons drawn. Both conditional and unconditional transfers can be effective for example on schooling outcomes (**Baird et al., 2013**). A review of evidence of cash transfers and children’s outcomes found that the impacts generated by unconditional transfers in sub-Saharan African ‘compare favourably to the impacts of conditional transfers in other regions, including Latin America’ (**UNICEF-EASARO/Transfer Project, 2015**: 44). A recent review of cash transfers found that ‘of the eight studies directly comparing a CCT to a UCT, six find (somewhat) bigger impacts for education and health and nutrition outcomes for CCTs and/or significant impacts where they are not significant for UCTs (four of these differences are statistically significant)’ (**Bastagli et al., 2016**: 12). However, the data does not disentangle which aspect of conditions was driving results in most studies (e.g. whether the impact is due to ‘the type of behavioural requirement, communication of the prescribed behaviour, planned response to non-compliance or implementation in practice’) (*ibid.*). Nevertheless a key finding was ‘the role of people’s perceptions of whether a conditionality is in place or not and of the messaging or communication of desired behaviours in facilitating intended outcomes’ (*ibid.*). In addition, there is little analysis of the costs and thus cost-effectiveness of conditional versus unconditional cash transfers.

It can be more difficult for some people to comply with conditions (e.g. people with disabilities may find it harder to visit a clinic): hard conditionality penalises the most vulnerable who are least able to meet the conditions, which is counterproductive to the social protection objectives of CCTs.

Conditionality can have specific and negative impacts for women in particular. Conditionality can reinforce social norms that underpin unequal gendered divisions for work and care responsibilities, for paid and unpaid work. For example if conditional cash transfer programmes assign the main responsibility for complying with conditions to women, this perpetuates the perception of women ‘as the sole caregivers responsible for their children’s health and education’ (**ILO, 2017**: 28). In addition, qualitative research among women conditional cash transfer recipients in Uruguay, Nicaragua, Mexico, and Peru has shown how CCT programmes rely on women’s unpaid labour and can become a burden for participating women, placing unreasonable demands on their time and resources

(Cookson, 2018: 5, 8). No CCT programme measures the costs associated with conditionality on recipients, such as transaction and opportunity costs and lack of value placed on women's time.

Conditions are complex and costly to administer; institutional capacity needs to be considered in their design, in particular for low-income settings like sub-Saharan Africa (Ralston et al., 2017: 24). For example, 'the feasibility of conditioning will depend on the adequacy of public services, scale-up capacity, cost-effectiveness of "explicit" conditionalities, and political feasibility' (ibid. citing Pellerano et al., 2014).

Key texts

> The Transfer Project (2017). *Myth-busting? How research is refuting common perceptions about unconditional cash transfers* (Research Brief 02).

Six common perceptions associated with cash transfers are investigated using data from eight rigorous evaluations of government unconditional cash transfer programmes across seven countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Used in policy debates, these perceptions undermine wellbeing improvements and poverty reduction, in Africa and globally. For example, one common misperception is that beneficiaries will not use unconditional cash transfers 'wisely' and that they may result in higher spending on alcohol and tobacco. The report sets out how the evidence refutes each of these claims.

> Bastagli, F., Hagen-Zanker, J., Harman, L., Barca, V., Sturge, G., & Schmidt, T. (2016). *Cash transfers: What does the evidence say? A rigorous review of programme impact and of the role of design and implementation features*. London: ODI.

For description, see [Section 4.1: Poverty, inequality and vulnerability – Key texts](#).

> Baird, S., Ferreira, F. H. G., Özler, B., & Woolcock, M. (2013). *Relative effectiveness of conditional and unconditional cash transfers for schooling outcomes in developing countries: A systematic review* (Campbell Systematic Reviews 2013:8). The Campbell Collaboration.

This systematic review finds that both conditional cash transfers (CCTs) and unconditional cash transfers (UCTs) improve the odds of being enrolled in and attending school compared to no cash transfer programme, but the effectiveness of cash transfer programmes on improving test scores is small at best.

> Fiszbein, A., & Schady, N. (2009). *Conditional cash transfers: Reducing present and future poverty* (World Bank Policy Research Report). Washington, DC: World Bank.

Do conditional cash transfer programmes (CCTs) succeed in reducing inequality? Are they effective in producing better development outcomes? This 400-page report argues that CCTs have been effective in redistributing income to the poor, while recognising that even the best-designed and best-managed programme cannot fulfil all the needs of a comprehensive social protection system. Evidence suggests that to maximise their potential impact, CCTs should be complemented with other interventions, particularly those that focus on outcomes rather than the use of services alone. CCTs represent the best means of redistribution when: poor households do not sufficiently invest in the human capital of their children, and when political realities necessitate that redistribution be conditioned on good behaviour.

See also:

> Evans D. K., & Popova, A. (2014). *Cash transfers and temptation goods* (World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 6886). Washington, DC: World Bank.

> Molina Millán, T., Barham, T., Maluccio, J., & Stampini, M. (2019). *Long-term impacts of conditional cash transfers: Review of the evidence*. *The World Bank Research Observer*, 34(1), 119–159.

Other resources



Hemsteede, R. (2018, 24 January). *Conditional or unconditional cash transfers? From ideology to policy dialogue*. Socialprotection.org

3.7 Public works programmes

Public works programming refers to the provision of state-sponsored employment for the working age poor who are unable to support themselves due to under-productivity, seasonality of rural and urban livelihoods, or the inadequacy of market-based employment opportunities. It also aims to help vulnerable people and households cope with economic, environmental, or humanitarian shocks.

Public works programmes (PWPs) entail the payment of a wage (in cash, food, or voucher) by the state or an agent acting on its behalf, in return for the provision of labour, to reduce poverty and vulnerability, produce a (physical or social) asset or service, and improve employability (McCord, 2008: 1).

Experience shows that public works programmes are 'an important safety net for addressing the poor's vulnerability to shocks' in low- and middle-income countries (Subbarao et al., 2013: 2, 6). Popular for maintaining worker dignity and improving the status of

vulnerable groups, the public and politicians tend to like PWP's potential to contribute to a productive economy and create public goods as well as build a community's capacity (*ibid.*: 4–5).

PWP's 'overall record of achievement is uneven' (*ibid.*: 2), with mixed results pointing to the importance of design and implementation (*GIZ, 2019*: 8). The evidence shows limited impacts even in the short term, with very little evidence to show post-programme benefits in the medium to longer term. A 2019 systematic review of the evidence in Africa and MENA region finds only a handful of studies reporting positive impacts on income and consumption (*ibid.*: 6). Half of those finding positive effects are of 'the direct [short-term] income-effect of wages received rather than post-programme impacts' (*ibid.*). There is no robust empirical evidence of PWP's generating medium- to long-term sustainable extra employment, improved nutrition or education outcomes, or asset accumulation (*ibid.*). Also, there is very little evidence on the benefits of the public infrastructure (community assets) produced by PWP's (*Gehrke & Hartwig, 2018*: 111) or of skills developed 'through training or on-the-job practice' (*GIZ, 2019*: 8).

Transparency and accountability are particular concerns: PWP's 'require strong checks and balances against possible error, fraud, and corruption' (*Subbarao et al., 2013*: 7).

Key texts

- > Beierl, S., & Grimm, M. (2017). *Do public works programmes work? A systematic review of the evidence in Africa and the MENA region*. Passau, Germany: University of Passau.

This comprehensive systematic review highlights how little is known about the effectiveness of PWP's and especially about the impact of the assets that are created through these programmes. The main lessons from this review are summarised in a [policy brief](#).

- > Gehrke, E., & Hartwig, R. (2018). *Productive effects of public works programs: What do we know? What should we know? World Development, 107(C), 111–124*.


This paper seeks to identify the benefits of PWP's, identifying four mechanisms 'through which PWP's could strengthen the productive capacity of poor households beyond the effects of cash transfers'. Reviewing the available empirical evidence from PWP's in developing countries, the authors conclude that PWP's 'are only preferable over alternative interventions if they generate substantial investments among the target group, if there is clear evidence that private-sector wages are below equilibrium wages, or if the public infrastructure generated in PWP's has substantial growth effects' (p. 111).

- > Subbarao, K., del Ninno, C., Andrews, C., & Rodríguez-Alas, C. (2013). *Public works as a safety net: Design, evidence, and implementation*. Washington, DC: World Bank. This book provides a comprehensive overview of public works programmes as a safety net instrument, and their impacts. It reviews programme design features and implementation methods, and presents a compendium of operational and how-to knowledge, combining technical expertise with ongoing country experiences.

See also:

- > McCord, A., & Paul, M. H. (2019). *An introduction to MGNREGA innovations and their potential for India–Africa linkages on public employment programming* (Working Paper). Bonn & Berlin: GIZ/BMZ.
- > McCord, A. (2018). *Linking social protection to sustainable employment: Current practices and future directions*. Manila: Australian Aid, Social Protection for Employment Community, & GIZ.
- > Ismail, Z. (2018). *Designing, implementing and evaluating public works programmes* (K4D Helpdesk Report). Birmingham: University of Birmingham.
- > Del Ninno, C., Subbarao, K., & Milazzo, A. (2009). *How to make public works work: A review of the experiences* (Social Protection Discussion Paper 0905). Washington, DC: World Bank.
- > McCord, A. (2008). *A typology for public works programming*. London: ODI.

Other resources

-  [Do public works programmes work? Design and implementation features for success. \(2019\).](#) GIZ. (1hr:40)

3.8 Graduation and cash plus

Graduation and cash plus interventions represent two relatively new types of programming that have seen rapid expansion in the last five to 10 years. Both types are based on the understanding that cash (and social protection) alone is generally not sufficient to promote people out of poverty and improve their lives in all its forms. They therefore integrate or link to other livelihoods interventions or services, thereby extending the scope beyond the provision of cash.

The **graduation** into sustainable livelihoods approach (hereafter referred to as 'graduation') and so-called 'graduation programmes' consist of a sequenced package of interventions aimed at tackling the multifaceted constraints faced by the poorest and most

vulnerable households. This commonly includes cash or in-kind transfers, asset transfers, access to savings and credit, training and tailored coaching over 18–24 months. Initial graduation pilots were largely delivered to rural women ([Arévalo et al., 2018](#): 29).

Pioneered by BRAC in Bangladesh in the early 2000s and further tested through a series of pilots conducted by the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP) and the Ford Foundation, the graduation approach has increasingly been adapted and implemented in low-income and middle-income countries. Evidence from these pilots indicates that programmes improve household-level outcomes such as consumption, asset holdings and food security. Many of these impacts were sustained one year after the programme had come to an end. Evidence about their impacts on women's empowerment and other social outcomes is relatively thin at present and inconclusive ([Banerjee et al., 2015](#)). Long-term evidence is still scarce but slowly emerging as more longitudinal data is available over time. Evidence of longer-term impact is already available for BRAC's Targeting the Ultra Poor (TUP) programme, showing that women had diversified livelihoods and increased earnings seven years after programme participation ([Bandiera et al., 2016](#)). Graduation programmes are currently being implemented in 43 countries, 75% of which are 'in fragile or conflict-affected countries, where extreme poverty is concentrated' ([Arévalo et al., 2018](#): 5). Graduation programmes have seen increased government involvement, with government-led schemes nearly doubling since 2016, and scaling achieved through adding onto existing government national safety nets ([ibid.](#): 31).

Priority research questions identified by the Partnership for Economic Inclusion (PEI) are: how graduation programmes can serve new population groups (such as youth and refugees) in other contexts (urban areas, those affected by climate change); how to maintain quality while operating at scale; and how to integrate graduation programming with government social protection systems and other programmes ([ibid.](#): 29). Other operational priorities are to unpack the role of the individual components in achieving impact for different target groups, improve targeting to identify those who would most benefit from the graduation package, and tailor programme design so that services and intensities of inputs are adjusted to meet needs (thereby also increasing cost-effectiveness) ([ibid.](#): 14, 16).

Cash plus programmes are premised on the understanding and evidence that cash transfers alone are not sufficient

to achieve higher order impacts, including human and social development as well as achieving more productive investments and behaviour. Cash transfers have had little impact on improving nutritional outcomes ([Roelen et al., 2017](#)), for example, and they tend to be invested in low-risk low-return activities ([FAO, 2018](#)). In contrast to graduation programmes, cash plus programmes focus on wider socioeconomic outcomes, are not premised on a pre-determined trajectory out of poverty and are usually not strictly time bound.

Programmes often evolve from existing cash-based programmes with additional components being added in a bid to reinforce and expand positive impacts. As such, cash plus interventions can take many forms. They tend to focus either on improving human development and human capital outcomes (e.g. nutrition, reproductive health, violence) or on productive inclusion (more sustainable livelihoods). The 'plus' element is provided either as integral elements of the cash transfer intervention or through offering linkages to services provided by other sectors. For human development-focused programmes, integral components include the provision of additional benefits or in-kind transfers, information or behaviour change communication, or psychosocial support, while linkages to services can be through direct support such as through provision of health insurance cards or facilitating linkages to services such as through referral mechanisms ([Roelen et al., 2017](#): 9). For programmes with a productive focus, integral components include the provision of productive assets and inputs such as seeds, fertiliser and livestock, and training on agricultural or business skills ([FAO, 2018](#)). Sometimes these kinds of productive-focused comprehensive interventions are discussed as types of graduation programmes.

Many pilot interventions are currently being implemented to test the effectiveness of different models. Results from a programme in Bangladesh show that the provision of cash plus behaviour change communication significantly improves nutrition outcomes and reduces intimate partner violence compared to cash alone (see Ahmed et al., 2016¹³ and [Roy et al., 2018](#)). In addition, impact evaluations of FAO cash plus pilots found that where cash transfers were combined with seeds and training in Lesotho, and poultry and small ruminants in Burkina Faso and Niger, the combined programmes had greater impact on household food production and food security than the single interventions ([FAO, 2018](#): 16–17).

¹³ No public link is available for this reference: Ahmed, A., Hoddinott, J., Roy, S., Sraboni, E., Quabili, W., & Margolies, A. (2016). *Which kinds of social safety net transfers work best for the ultra poor in Bangladesh? Operation and impacts of the Transfer Modality Research Initiative*. Dhaka: IFPRI & World Food Programme.

Key texts

- > Arévalo, I., Kaffenberger, M., & de Montesquiou, A. (2018). *2018 State of the sector synthesis report*. Partnership for Economic Inclusion, World Bank.

This report presents findings from an online survey in 2017 covering 118 graduation programmes, undertaken by the Partnership for Economic Inclusion (PEI) (previously CGAP Graduation Initiative). The report summarises the scale, scope and actors involved with graduation programmes, as well as findings on whether graduation drives change and implications for design and implementation.

- > FAO. (2018). *FAO and Cash+. How to maximize the impacts of cash transfers*. Rome: FAO.

This report summarises FAO's position on Cash+, defined as 'an intervention that combines cash transfers with productive assets, inputs, and/or technical training and activities to enhance the livelihoods and productive capacities of poor and vulnerable households' (p. 6). It sets out how to design a Cash+ programme, the range of implementation modalities, and how to achieve policy coherence. It also provides information on impact evaluation and evidence generation for Cash+, finishing with a brief section on FAO's experience with Cash+.

- > Sulaiman, M. (2018). *Livelihood, cash transfer, and graduation approaches: How do they fare in cost, impact, and targeting? In Boosting growth to end hunger by 2025: The role of social protection* (pp. 102–120). International Food Policy Research Institute.

This review, conducted during 2014–2016, identified 48 livelihood, graduation, and cash transfer initiatives with both impact evaluations and project-specific cost data. These cases are used to develop a distribution of cost-effectiveness to identify the best options for increasing the incomes of the extreme poor. Key findings are that 'targeting the extreme poor is not a common feature of the livelihood and lump-sum cash transfer programs. Average delivery cost is the highest for graduation programs and the lowest for cash transfers, while livelihood programs have a large diversity in per beneficiary cost. In terms of impact, graduation programs are the most consistent in making significant positive impacts across sites and in the longer term, while livelihood programs and cash transfers generally lack evidence of sustainability of impact among the extreme poor' (p. 119).


- > Roelen, K., Devereux, S., Abdulai, A-G., Martorano, B., Palermo, T., & P. L. Ragno (2017). *How to make 'cash plus' work: Linking cash transfers to services and sectors* (Innocenti Working Paper 2017-10). Florence: UNICEF Office of Research.


This paper identifies key factors for successful implementation of cash plus programmes. It reviews the emerging evidence base of 'cash plus' interventions, and analyses three case studies – Chile Solidario in Chile, IN-SCT in Ethiopia, and LEAP in Ghana.


See also:


- > Bandiera, O., Burgess, R., Das, N., Gulesci, S., Rasul, I., & Sulaiman, M. (2017). *Labor markets and poverty in village economies*. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 132(2), 811–870.
- > de Montesquiou, A., & Hashemi, S. (2017). *The graduation approach within social protection: Opportunities for going to scale*. *Policy in Focus*, 14(2), 17–21. International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth.
- > Banerjee, A., Duflo, E., Goldberg, N., Karlan, D., Osei, R., Parienté, W., ... & Udry, C. (2015). *A multifaceted program causes lasting progress for the very poor: Evidence from six countries*. *Science*, 348(6236).
- > Devereux, S., & Sabates-Wheeler, R. (Eds.). (2015). *Graduating from social protection? IDS Bulletin*, 46(2).


Other resources

-  BRAC's ultra-poor graduation approach: *Evidence, innovations and intersection with social protection*. (2017). Social Protection Employment Community (SPEC). (1hr:58)

-  *The evidence on 'graduation' programmes*. (2016). Kidd, S. at the UNRISD Seminar on Graduation. (18m:41)

-  *The ultra poor graduation approach*. (2016). Whitehead, L. at the UNRISD Seminar on Graduation. (21m:09)

-  'Graduating from social protection' – panel discussion. Convened by ODI to launch *IDS Bulletin*. (2015). (51m:58)

-  'The cash plus model: Improving adolescent wellbeing with evidence'. An example from Tanzania of UNICEF HIV/AIDS prevention programming with adolescents. (2019). UNICEF. (9m:48)

3.9 The future of work

Social protection systems around the world face challenges to provide full and effective coverage for workers in all forms of employment, including those in 'new' forms of employment. The nature of work is expected to change markedly over the coming decades. Major trends are: automation and digitalisation, labour market changes (including the rise of the 'gig economy' and rise of flexible forms of work and working patterns) and changes to the nature of production, with markets becoming increasingly dominated by large firms (**Behrendt & Nguyen, 2018; World Bank, 2019**).

While some emerging work and employment arrangements may provide greater flexibility for workers and employers, they may lead to significant gaps in social protection coverage (or create challenges to filling existing gaps). Many workers in 'non-standard forms of employment have lower job and income security, poorer working conditions and lower social protection coverage', in both traditional sectors, such as agriculture or construction, as well as emerging sectors, including the digital economy (**Behrendt & Nguyen, 2018**: 1). 'Women, young people and migrants are overrepresented in these forms of work' (*ibid.*), as well as indigenous people and members of many ethnic minorities. These new forms of employment will limit contributions to social insurance schemes (*ibid.*: 2), while 'the inward migratory pressure that many developed countries are expected to incur in the future may squeeze social protection systems further' (**Balliester & Elsheikhi, 2018**: 38). Recommendations include providing workers in non-standard forms of employment with social security benefits, and more transformative solutions such as universal basic income (*ibid.*).

Key texts

- > **World Bank. (2019). *World development report 2019. The changing nature of work*. Washington, DC: World Bank.**

This World Development Report notes that many jobs today, and many more in the near future, will require specific skills – a combination of technological know-how, problem-solving, and critical thinking – as well as soft skills such as perseverance, collaboration, and empathy. The report challenges governments to take better care of their citizens and calls for a universal, guaranteed minimum level of social protection.

- > **ILO. (2019). *Work for a brighter future. Global commission on the future of work*. Geneva: ILO.** This report details the new forces transforming the world of work and sets out a human-centred agenda to deliver economic security, equal opportunity and

social justice. It identifies three pillars of action: increasing investment in (1) people's capabilities, (2) the institutions of work, and (3) decent and sustainable work.

- > **Behrendt, C., & Nguyen, Q. A. (2018). *Innovative approaches for ensuring universal social protection for the future of work* (Future of Work Research Paper 1). Geneva: International Labour Office.** This paper reviews innovative approaches by countries to adapt social protection systems to the changing world of work, focusing on workers who commonly are not provided with social protection: part-time workers, workers on temporary contracts, self-employed workers and those with unclear employment relationships, and workers on digital platforms. It highlights how innovative adaptations combine contributory and non-contributory mechanisms.
- > **RNSF. (2017). *Extending coverage: Social protection and the informal economy. Experiences and ideas from researchers and practitioners*. Research, Network and Support Facility, ARS Progetti, Rome; Lattanzio Advisory, Milan; & AGRER, Brussels.** This book is a collection of current knowledge and experiences of how to extend the benefits of social protection to workers in the informal economy. Compiled during a workshop held at Lake Naivasha, Kenya, from 6–10 February 2017, with a mixed group of scientists and practitioners implementing projects in Egypt, India, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia and Tanzania. It argues that social protection systems can be designed to be more flexible and illustrates how the underlying idea of social protection can be made operational for the informal sector.

See also:

- > **McCord, A. (2018). *Linking social protection to sustainable employment: Current practices and future directions*. Manila: Australian Aid, Social Protection for Employment Community & GIZ.**
- > **Balliester, T., & Elsheikhi, A. (2018). *The future of work: A literature review* (Research Department Working Paper 29). International Labour Office.**
- > **Alfers, L., Lund, F., & Moussié, R. (2017). *Approaches to social protection for informal workers: Aligning productivist and human rights-based approaches*. *International Social Security Review*, 90(4), 67–85.**
- > **Holmes, R., & Scott, L. (2016). *Extending social insurance to informal workers: A gender analysis* (ODI Working Paper 438). London: ODI.**

3.10 Universal basic income

There are different definitions of universal basic income (UBI), reflected in the different types of experiments in UBI that are taking place. Two common characteristics of a UBI are ‘the aim of reaching a vast portion of individuals/households in society... in an “unconditional” way (or under a very broad conditionality)’ (Francese & Prady, 2018: 6). There are UBI-type schemes covering nearly the whole population in Alaska and Iran, as well as a project in India defined as ‘universal basic share’ (Colombino, 2019: 7).

The pros and cons of UBIs is a topical debate in countries of all income levels. Proponents of UBI look to their potential to ‘achieve redistributive objectives, i.e., to tackle poverty and inequality, and to broaden the coverage of income-support programs’, responding to weaknesses of current social protection models (in particular, issues of leakage and under-coverage) (Francese & Prady, 2018: 6, 8). The main arguments in support of UBI are that:

- Compared to means-tested programmes, UBI can have lower administrative costs, more transparent transfer systems, and fewer opportunities for fraud, third-party capture or political manipulation (Francese & Prady, 2018: 6–7; Colombino, 2018: 6).
- UBI is an increasingly pertinent option to respond to today’s changing world of work, which has seen automation and globalisation resulting in job losses, high job insecurity and other systemic risks that current social protection models and funding struggle to respond to (Colombino, 2019: 2; Francese & Prady, 2018).
- UBI can generate public and political support for structural economic reforms by mitigating adverse impacts on low- and middle-income households (Coady & Prady, 2018: 4; Francese & Prady, 2018: 7).

Concerns about UBI schemes include whether it would discourage people from working while leaking scarce resources to wealthier households, thereby increasing the fiscal cost of a UBI (Francese & Prady, 2018: 7). There is also a discussion on whether UBIs would incentivise or discourage people to seek employment. Such effects will depend on design details such as who benefits (the coverage), by how much (the size of the benefit), and how progressive the policy is overall (ibid.). Another concern is that while ‘some UBI proposals have the potential to advance equity and social justice... others may result in a net welfare loss’, with impact on poverty and inequality depending ‘on the level of benefits and the source of funding’ (Ortiz et al., 2018: v).

In sum, policymakers have to consider trade-offs along the following key dimensions when considering the relevant mix of social protection instruments (including UBI) for a

particular country context: ‘[C]overage at the bottom of the income distribution versus leakages to richer households; generosity of transfers versus incentives and economic distortions; fiscal cost versus alternative use of scarce fiscal resources’ and ‘how to reconcile objectives and implementation challenges’ (Francese & Prady, 2018: 21).

Experience and research on UBI in low-income countries is limited. Colombino (2019: 7) reports that results from UBI experiments in India, Namibia and Uganda include strengthening recipients’ sense of autonomy and responsibility (avoiding paternalism or stigma effects), increasing labour supply and productive activity, and improvements in human capital (education, occupational choice and health). Banerjee et al. (2019: 22) report that an analysis by programme advocates of the UBI pilot in Namibia 2008–2009 (with all residents younger than 60 and registered as living in the programme area received monthly, unconditional transfers) found poverty and child malnutrition decreased while rates of income-generating activities and children’s school attendance rose. However, another study by Hanna and Olken (2018), analysing evidence from Indonesia and Peru, found that ‘despite the imperfections in targeting using proxy-means tests, targeted transfers may result in substantially higher welfare gains than universal programs, because for a given total budget they deliver much higher transfers to the poor’ (Hanna & Olken, 2018: abstract).

There are evidence gaps. There is no ‘systematic comparison of administrative costs (monitoring, delivery, litigation) of UBI compared with conditional or means-tested policies’, and robust evidence on income effects is limited (Colombino, 2019: 9).

Key texts

- > Colombino, U. (2019, March). Is unconditional basic income a viable alternative to other social welfare measures? *IZA World of Labor* 2019: 128.

This article sets out the motivations for exploring unconditional basic income (UBI) options, looking at global trends transforming the world of work. It discusses the pros and cons of UBI, and the challenges to implementing a UBI policy. It also summarises the available empirical evidence on UBIs.




- > Francese, M., & Prady, D. (2018). Universal basic income: Debate and impact assessment (IMF Working Paper WP/18/273). Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund.

This paper sets out the definitions of a UBI, the arguments for and against, and proposes an analytical framework. It explores key design dimensions of: ‘coverage, generosity of the program, overall progressivity of the policy, and its financing’ (abstract).

See also:

- > Banerjee, A., Niehaus, P., & Suri, T. (2019). *Universal basic income in the developing world* (NBER Working Paper 25598). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- > Coady, M. D., & Prady, D. (2018). *Universal basic income in developing countries: Issues, options, and illustration for India* (IMF Working Paper WP/18/174). Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund.
- > Hanna, R., & Olken, B. A. (2018). *Universal basic incomes versus targeted transfers: Anti-poverty programs in developing countries*. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 32(4), 201–26.
- > Ortiz, I., Behrendt, C., Acuña-Ulate, A., & Nguyen, Q. (2018). *Universal basic income proposals in light of ILO standards: Key issues and global costing* (ESS Working Paper 62). Geneva: International Labour Office.

Other resources

-  **Informality and income insecurity: Is basic income a universal solution?** (2016). UNRISD. (A series of presentations is available)
-  **'Basic income works!'. Reaching the unreachable and self-employed people in the informal economy in India.** (2014). Social Protection and Human Rights Platform. (12m:52)
-  **Gentilini, U., & Yemtsov, R. (2017). Being open-minded about universal basic income.** World Bank.

3.11 Humanitarian–social protection linkages

Globally, natural, economic and political disasters and crises are increasing – in 'frequency, size and duration' (O'Brien et al., 2018: ii). Emerging experience has shown social protection systems and approaches have considerable potential to 'bridge the humanitarian–development divide' (EC, 2019: 11). While there are promising experiences, as a relatively new topic, there is limited practice and evidence, with most of the evidence coming from 'relatively stable countries prone to natural disasters' (ibid.: 7).

Shock-responsive social protection

There is growing interest in social protection as a tool to deliver assistance in response to shocks (before or after a crisis starts, preventing, mitigating or addressing the impact of shocks), covering both chronic and acute needs 'through established, scalable systems' (Ulrichs & Sabates-Wheeler, 2018: 3).

A growing body of research explores the opportunities for 'coordination (and possible integration) of humanitarian interventions, disaster risk management (DRM) and social protection' (O'Brien et al., 2018: ii). There are a range of options for shock-responsive social protection programmes. Most focus and experiences have been on vertical expansion (increasing the benefit value or duration of an existing programme) and some horizontal expansion (adding new beneficiaries to an existing programme) (Ulrichs & Sabates-Wheeler, 2018: 9).

Table 3. Typology: Options for shock-responsive adaptation of social protection programmes

| Name of option | Description |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Design tweaks | Adjusting a programme or system to integrate risks expected in a given context. This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relaxing programme guidelines during crisis times (e.g. waive conditions) • Expanding social protection support in at-risk areas |
| Vertical expansion | Increasing the benefit value or duration of an existing programme. This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjustment of transfer amounts • Introduction of extraordinary payments or transfers |
| Horizontal expansion | Adding new beneficiaries to an existing programme. This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension of the geographical coverage of an existing programme • Extraordinary enrolment campaign • Modifications of entitlement rules • Relaxation of requirements/conditionality to facilitate participation |
| Piggybacking | Using a social protection intervention's administrative framework, but running the shock-response programme separately. May include the introduction of a new policy. |
| Shadow alignment | Developing a parallel humanitarian system that aligns as best as possible with a current or possible future social protection programme. |

Source: Ulrichs and Sabates-Wheeler (2018: 9), reproduced with permission.

Other options include design tweaks, piggybacking, and shadow alignment. See Table 3 for the typology adapted from [OPM \(2015\)](#) and [O'Brien et al. \(2018\)](#) by [Ulrichs & Sabates-Wheeler \(2018: 9\)](#).

Although not the only intervention with potential crossover in crisis and stable contexts, cash transfers are 'a natural point of convergence' for social protection and humanitarian programming ([Gentilini et al., 2018: 41](#); [Roelen et al., 2018](#)).

Working with social protection in crisis contexts has the potential to contribute to greater effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability by, for example, reducing response times; avoiding duplication between agencies responding to a crisis; strengthening or building national systems; offering choice and dignity; delivering predictable support through established, systematised (often cash-based) channels; supporting local economies; offering a progressive exit strategy from humanitarian aid; and supporting sustainability of impacts and enhancing value for money ([EC, 2019: 31](#)). When considering the best approach during a crisis, donors should consider trade-offs between degree of ownership and other dimensions such as timeliness and accountability, and the (financial, institutional and administrative) absorptive capacity of national systems ([Gentilini et al., 2018: 39–40](#)). The design and implementation of shock-sensitive approaches should also be informed by 'a gender and intersectional perspective if programmes are to support positive outcomes for women and girls across the life cycle and minimise any negative effects' ([Holmes, 2019: 5](#)).

Key texts

- > [EC. \(2019\). *Social protection across the humanitarian–development nexus: A game changer in supporting people through crises* \(Tools and Methods Series, Reference Document 26\). Brussels: European Commission.](#)
This reference document provides an overview of global experience and approaches. It identifies challenges and key issues, suggesting key criteria to inform decisions on appropriate response options. The document and its [summary](#) were produced as part of the European Commission's Guidance Package on Social Protection across the Humanitarian–Development Nexus (SPaN).
- > [O'Brien, C., Scott, Z., Smith, G., Barca V., Kardan, A., Holmes, R., Watson, C., & Congrave, J. \(2018\). *Shock-responsive social protection systems research: Synthesis report*. Oxford: Oxford Policy Management.](#)

This synthesis report (drawing on six case studies and a review of the literature) highlights the key ways in which social protection systems can contribute to mitigate the effects of shocks or respond to them. It sets out programme design and implementation to achieve an efficient and effective response to crises. It looks at what has been learned so far on how to collaborate successfully between humanitarian, disaster risk management and social protection systems. See full set of outputs (including webinar and video of key findings) from this study in 'Other resources' below.

- > [Ulrichs, M., & Sabates-Wheeler, R. \(2018\). *Social protection and humanitarian response: What is the scope for integration?* \(IDS Working Paper 516\). Brighton: IDS.](#)
This paper lays out the key arguments for more integration between the humanitarian and social protection sectors. It explores potential tensions arising from conflicting mandates and institutional structures. Further work is needed on the technicalities of linking short- and longer-term interventions in humanitarian contexts, particularly in relation to mobile populations and refugees, and on understanding the political economy factors that facilitate bridging the humanitarian–development divide.

See also:

- > [Cabot Venton, C. \(2018\). *Economics of resilience to drought in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia*. USAID Center for Resilience.](#)
- > [Gentilini, U., Laughton, S., & O'Brien, C. \(2018\). *Human\(itarian\) capital? Lessons on better connecting humanitarian assistance and social protection* \(Social Protection & Jobs Discussion Paper 1802\). World Food Programme & World Bank.](#)
- > [Holmes, R. \(2019\). *Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in shock-sensitive social protection* \(ODI Working Paper 549\). London: ODI.](#)
- > [Roelen, R., Longhurst, D., & Sabates-Wheeler, R. \(2018\). *The role of cash transfers in social protection, humanitarian response and shock-responsive social protection* \(IDS Working Paper 517\). Brighton: IDS.](#)

Other resources

- > ['Social protection in humanitarian contexts'. The challenges of learning from research in fragile contexts and the range of responses. \(2018\). UNICEF. \(2m:57\)](#)



Examining the global literature on 'shock responsive social protection', proposing a framework for countries to use when assessing their system, alongside practical recommendations and country insights (including a guest session from Malawi). (2019). Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia), World Food Programme, & GIZ Malawi. (1hr:30:50)



Oxford Policy Management study on shock-responsive social protection (see [Key texts](#) above for link to summary of the main report). Summary of the project and full set of outputs.

Other resources available from this study include:



What role can social protection play in responding to humanitarian emergencies? Findings from a global study. (2018). Oxford Policy Management. (1hr:30:51)



'What role can social protection systems play in responding to humanitarian emergencies?' (2017). Oxford Policy Management. (4m:06)

Protracted conflict

Protracted conflicts interrupt markets, destroy livelihoods, and increase morbidity and mortality, distress, and forced migration ([Winder Rossi et al., 2017](#): 11). There has been growing interest in the potential of social protection to deliver on two objectives in conflict situations: (1) to 'address poverty and inequality by transferring resources to those who are poor, marginalized and food insecure'; and (2) to help build institutions, policy and partnerships, thereby supporting peace and building social cohesion ([ibid.](#)). Programming choices – and the appropriate balance between social assistance, social insurance, and labour policies and interventions – 'vary widely in fragile and conflict-affected countries, and depend on the capacity, income, political leadership and enabling environment in the country' ([Ovadiya et al., 2015](#): 37).

Evidence supporting the role of social protection in building social cohesion – and knowledge of the most effective pathways to achieve this – is scant ([Winder Rossi et al., 2017](#): 11). Nevertheless, measures such as subsidies and cash benefits 'are widely used in fragile and conflict-affected countries to ease political and social tensions', including as rewards to population groups following conflict ([Ovadiya et al., 2015](#): 36). Building on community crisis response and supporting service delivery during a transitional phase may be some of the ways to build peace and social cohesion, but further research is required ([Winder Rossi et al., 2017](#): 11).

In conflict situations, government social protection systems are often weak with limited coverage and effectiveness ([Carpenter et al., 2012](#)). When 'the state is an active party to the conflict and does not control all of its territory... even well-developed social protection systems may only be able to reach part of the population' ([Winder Rossi et al., 2017](#): 32).

Key texts

> [Winder Rossi, N., Spano, F., Sabates-Wheeler, R., & Kohnstamm, S. \(2017\). *Social protection and resilience. Supporting livelihoods in protracted crises, fragile and humanitarian context* \(FAO Position Paper\). Rome: FAO & IDS.](#)

This paper builds on the FAO 2017 Social Protection Framework and focuses on the role of social protection systems in humanitarian contexts, looking in particular at protracted crises. It sets out a range of different scenarios which can be used to identify the appropriate social protection intervention strategy, depending on levels of system maturity based on state capacity, and flexibility and capacity to respond.

> [Ovadiya, M., Kryeziu, A., Masood, S., & Zapatero, E. \(2015\). *Social protection in fragile and conflict-affected countries, trends and challenges* \(Social Protection & Labor Discussion Paper 1502\). Washington, DC: World Bank.](#)

This study examines the role of social protection programming, and programming design and implementation features that are prominent in fragile and conflict-affected states. It sets out 'how a combination of various fragile and conflict-affected country characteristics affects the needs of the population, the universe of possible policy and programming responses, and – ultimately – the trajectory to building social protection systems in different settings' (p. 6).

See also:

> [Idris, I. \(2017\). *Conflict-sensitive cash transfers: Social cohesion* \(K4D Helpdesk Report 201\). Brighton: IDS.](#)

Forced displacement

The potential of social protection to help forcibly displaced populations is of growing interest. The world is experiencing the largest refugee crisis since the Second World War, with 68.5 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, of which 40 million are internally displaced people, 25.4 million are refugees (over half of whom are under the age of 18), and 3.1 million asylum-seekers ([UNICEF, Figures at a Glance](#):

accessed 16 June 2019; [Ulrichs et al., 2017](#): 2). There are a number of opportunities to tailor social protection programming to help reduce low-income labour migrants', refugees', and other forcibly displaced peoples' vulnerabilities, prior to departure, during the journey, upon arrival in a country of destination, and at the point of return ([Long & Sabates-Wheeler, 2017](#): 15). [UNHCR \(2019\)](#): 3) recommends that when refugees cannot access the national system, the 'starting point should be to align – or use the existing mechanisms – to the extent possible', while highlighting that the specifics will be determined by the particular context (e.g. in 'some settings, alignment of the transfer value and the targeting approach may be appropriate while the transfer mechanism is not and vice versa').

Research in Jordan in 2016 found that regular, predictable UNHCR-delivered cash transfers gave refugees access to secure shelter, reducing their use of negative coping strategies ([Ulrichs et al., 2017](#): 1). However, social protection support to the refugee population functions outside of the national system, which can fuel resentment among the host population if the host community feel refugees are prioritised over them, and can hinder long-term social and economic integration of refugees. The authors found that merging both systems was not politically feasible at the time of the study, but note that 'policy-makers and practitioners can learn from emerging approaches, such as Turkey's Emergency Social Safety Net, where the design of the humanitarian cash transfer is modelled closely on the social assistance provided by the Turkish Ministry of Family and Social Policy and therefore has the potential to be merged into a single system in the future' ([Hagen-Zanker et al., 2017](#): 26).

Key texts

- > [UNHCR \(2019\). *Aligning humanitarian cash assistance with national social safety nets in refugee settings. Key considerations and learning*. Geneva: UNHCR.](#)

Based on information collected from Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, Greece and Mexico, and building on a previous [UNHCR mapping of the opportunities and challenges in social safety nets for refugees](#), this UNHCR report sets out recommendations for 'how operations have or could progressively align humanitarian cash assistance for refugees to national social safety nets (SSN) and the criteria used to take decisions at each step of this process' (p. 2).

- > [Long, K., & Sabates-Wheeler, R. \(2017\). *Migration, forced displacement and social protection* \(GSDRC Rapid Literature Review\). Birmingham: University of Birmingham.](#)

This paper considers the potential role that social protection interventions – or the lack of them – can play in precipitating, directing or halting movement (e.g. from a country of origin without a functioning social protection system). It also considers the various forms of social protection needed by different groups at different stages of their journey and on arrival.

- > [Hagen-Zanker, J., Ulrichs, M., Holmes, R., & Nimeh, Z. \(2017\). *Cash transfers for refugees: The economic and social effects of a programme in Jordan*. London: ODI.](#)

This study assesses if the provision of cash transfers to refugees settled in urban areas outside of camps in Jordan reduced barriers to accessing basic services and employment, and whether such transfers can contribute to longer-term economic and social outcomes for displaced populations. An ODI Briefing by Ulrichs et al. (2017) outlines the findings of this study.

Other resources

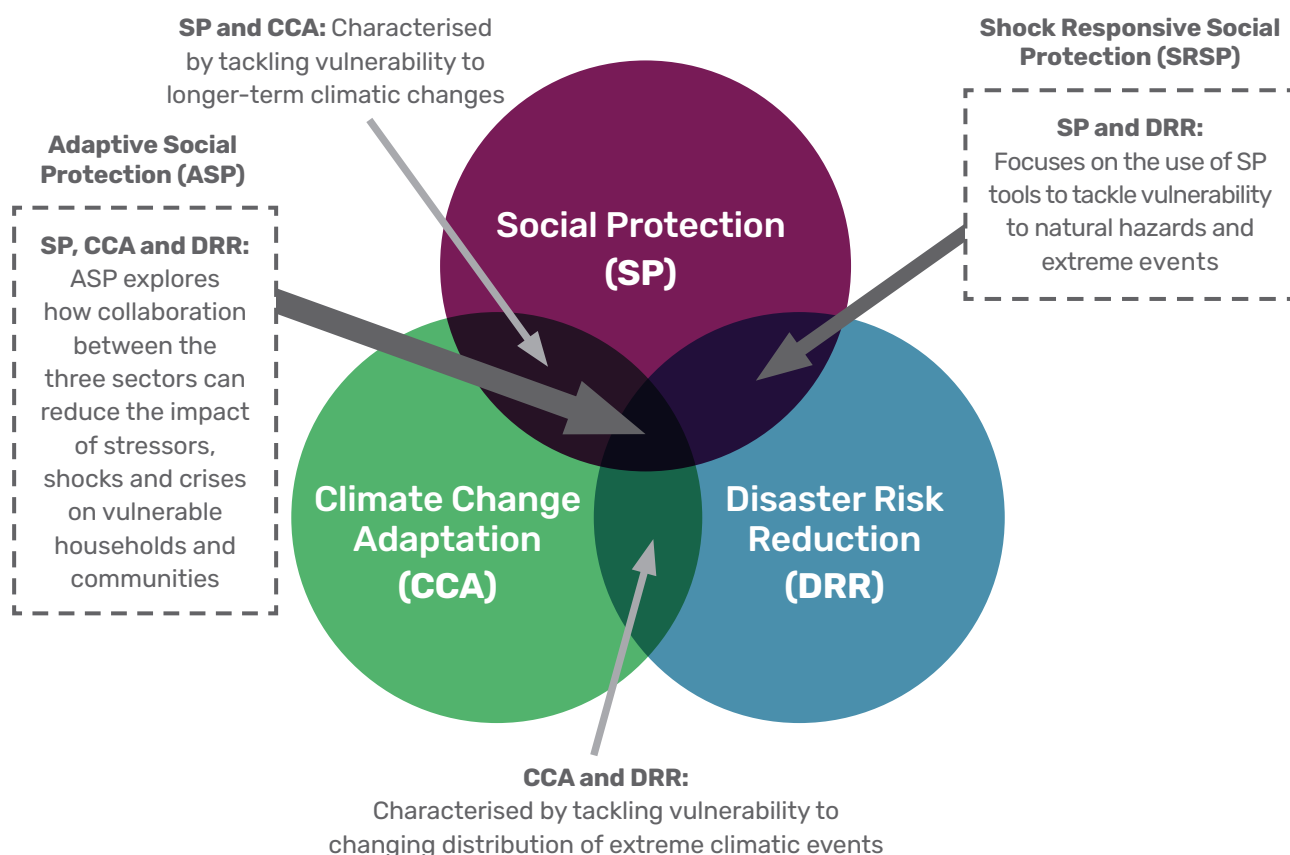


[Access to social protection for internal migrants and the obstacles to adequate coverage. \(2015, 18 November\). Hagen-Zanker, J. at seminar, part of the Michaelmas term International Migration Institute seminar series on migration and social protection. \(32m:43\)](#)

3.12 Climate resilience

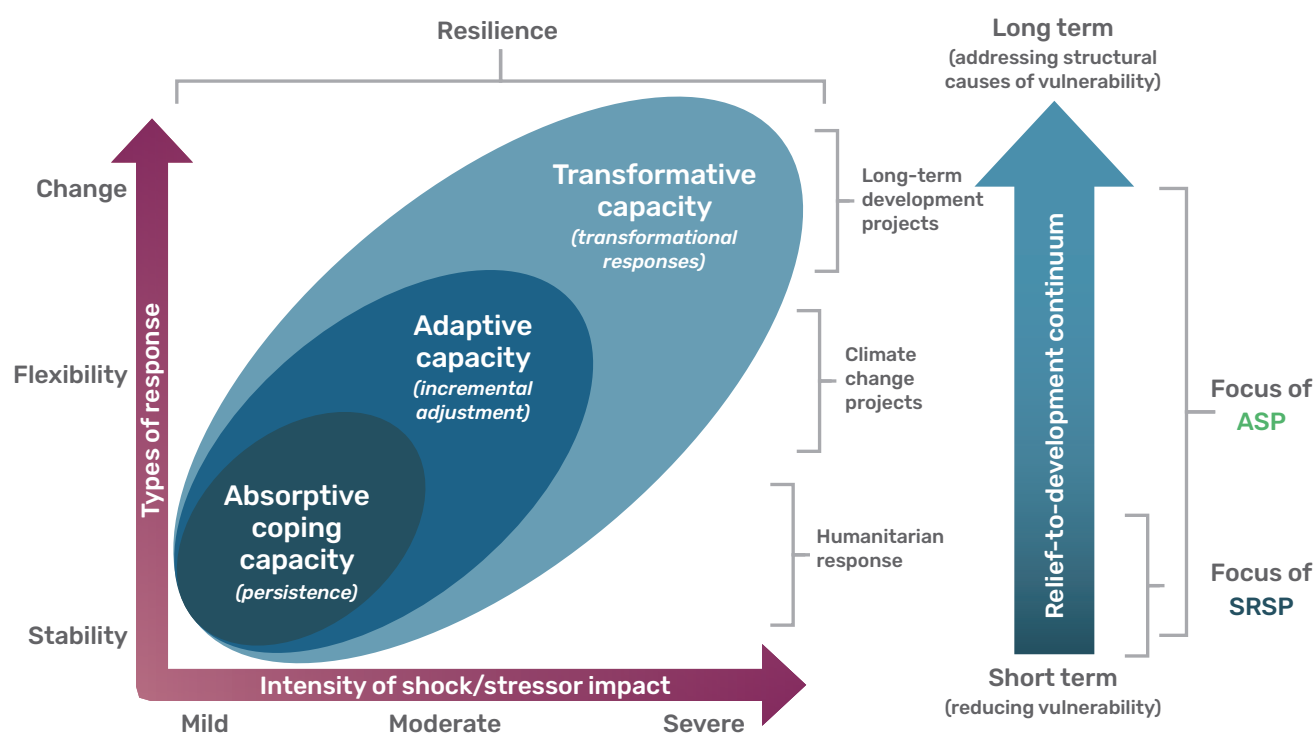
Social protection, climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) all share the same motivating principle of seeking to mitigate risks, reduce vulnerability and build resilience to livelihood shocks ([Vincent & Cull, 2012](#)). This overlap lends itself to integrated policies and programmes which address both social and environmental factors, with a long-term, preventative approach. This is known as 'adaptive social protection'. While some use the terms 'adaptive social protection' and 'shock-responsive social protection' interchangeably, adaptive was first used by [Davies et al. \(2009\)](#): 9) to refer to transforming productive livelihoods to adapt 'to changing climate conditions rather than simply reinforcing coping mechanisms'. Work by [Cornelius et al. \(2018\)](#) sets out how the two concepts differ – see Figures 4 and 5.

Figure 4. Thematic positioning



Source: © Cornelius et al. (2018), reproduced with permission.

Figure 5. ASP and SRSP in the context of resilience and the development continuum



Source: © Cornelius et al. (2018), reproduced with permission.

As well as helping to protect against current shocks, 'social protection can support more effective resilience building at scale by integrating early action and preparedness' (Costella et al., 2017: 31). For example, public works programmes may contribute to adaptation and DRR through the construction of community assets that enhance resilience through better natural resource management and adaptation. Adaptive social protection could be used to target those whose livelihoods and status are vulnerable to climate change, reducing their dependence on climate-sensitive livelihoods strategies, and helping build household resilience to climate risks (Davies et al., 2009).

The evidence that social protection can effectively reduce vulnerability to climate change is still quite thin, but is increasing (Vincent & Cull, 2012). Much "climate-smart" social protection has focused on the ability of [social protection] to support shock response', with more limited experiences of 'the role it can play to anticipate and adapt to climate risks' (Costella et al., 2017: 32; Vincent & Cull, 2012).

Key factors to consider to ensure social protection programmes are more 'adaptive' and able to respond to increasing risks posed by climate extremes and disasters include: 'designing flexible and scalable programmes, ensuring the support provided reduces current as well as future vulnerability and putting in place targeting, financing and coordination mechanisms that facilitate cross-sector responses to different types of risks' (Ulrichs, 2016: 12).

Key texts

- > Costella, C., Jaime, C., Arrighi, J., Coughlan de Perez, E., Suarez, P., & van Aalst, M. (2017). Scalable and sustainable: How to build anticipatory capacity into social protection systems. *IDS Bulletin* 48(4).
This article argues that scalable social protection systems can support climate risk management by focusing on risk mitigation and preparedness measures that increase the capacity of the system to anticipate shocks. It focuses on Forecast-based Financing (FbF), an innovative instrument being piloted as part of humanitarian operations to support improved anticipation and mitigation of climate shocks.
- > Ulrichs, M. (2016). Increasing people's resilience through social protection (Resilience Intel 3). BRACED.
Ulrichs identifies critical design factors that support the role of social protection in increasing vulnerable people's ability to anticipate, absorb and adapt to



climate shocks and disasters. These include the adequacy of support (sufficient size and type of transfer, delivered in a reliable and timely manner), as well as flexibility of social protection programmes' design and implementation mechanisms to expand coverage during times of crisis (and to scale down afterwards). Other factors are adequate information management systems, appropriate financing mechanisms and cross-sector collaboration.

- > Davies, M., Guenther, B., Leavy, J., Mitchell, T., & Tanner, T. (2009). Climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and social protection: Complementary roles in agriculture and rural growth? (IDS Working Paper 320). Brighton: IDS.
How can synergies between social protection, DRR, and CCA be identified and developed? Social protection initiatives are unlikely to succeed in reducing poverty if they do not consider both the short- and long-term shocks and stresses associated with climate change. The 'adaptive social protection' framework helps to identify opportunities for social protection to enhance adaptation, and for social protection programmes to be more climate-resilient. Adaptive social protection involves a long-term perspective that considers the changing nature of climate-related shocks and stresses, draws on rights, and aims to transform livelihoods.

See also:

- > Bene, C., Cornelius, A., & Howland, F. (2018). Bridging humanitarian responses and long-term development through transformative changes – Some initial reflections from the World Bank's Adaptive Social Protection Program in the Sahel. *Sustainability* 10(6), 1697.
- > Ziegler, S. (2016). Adaptive social protection – Linking social protection and climate change adaptation (GIZ Discussion Papers on Social Protection). Bonn & Eschborn: GIZ.
- > Wallis, C., & Buckle, F. (2016). Social protection and climate resilience: Learning notes on how social protection builds climate resilience. Evidence on Demand, UK.

Other resources

-  Cornelius, A., Béné, C., & Howland, F. (2018). Is my social protection programme 'shock-responsive' or 'adaptive'? Itad.
-  Cornelius, A., Béné, C., Howland, F., & Henderson, E. (2018). Five key principles for adaptive social protection programming. Itad.

3.13 Urban contexts

As the global urban population increases and poverty urbanises, it becomes increasingly important to understand how to make social protection work in urban settings. Most social assistance programmes in low- and middle-income countries have hitherto been conceived for rural areas. The scope and focus of interventions can change quite remarkably depending on whether poverty is expressed in prevalence or absolute terms, i.e. areas where poverty rates are highest (generally rural areas) or areas with the highest number of poor people (often urban areas). Urban areas pose fundamentally different sets of opportunities and challenges for social protection. Social protection programmes are at the very beginning of a process of urban adaptation ([Gentilini, 2015](#)).

Designing social assistance for urban contexts faces challenges and the initial performance of first-generation urban interventions seems to have been lower than predicted because of the range of technical hurdles ([ibid.](#): 12). These include: accurately targeting the urban poor ('given the spatial geography of urban poverty' and the 'fluid expansion and contraction of urban informal settlements'); reaching and communicating with prospective beneficiaries about available benefits (e.g. because of high mobility or being homeless) and setting appropriate payment levels (given the high and variable costs of urban living) ([Devereux et al., 2018](#): 4; [Gentilini, 2015](#): 12). Moreover, 'even when people are reached, programs may not be attractive enough to offset relatively high urban opportunity costs or address particular bottlenecks' (e.g. for older people or seasonal migrants) ([ibid.](#): 12). Some countries have gradually refined their programmes and adapted their approaches to fit complex urban contexts ([ibid.](#)).

[Majoor and Pelham \(2018](#): 35) highlight that understanding how social protection may be used in urban contexts to respond to shocks requires a typology of different urban contexts (from rapid-onset shocks to protracted displacement), as well as a need to understand how protection and gender concerns in both access to and use of cash will differ in urban areas compared to rural contexts.

Key texts

- > [Devereux, S., Abdulai, A-G., Cuesta, J., Gupte, J., Ragno, L., Roelen, K., Sabates-Wheeler, R., & Spadafora, T. \(2018\). *Can social assistance \(with a child lens\) help in reducing urban poverty in Ghana? Evidence, challenges and way forward* \(Innocenti Working Paper\). Florence: UNICEF Office of Research.](#)

This paper provides a case study of Ghanaian experiences of providing social assistance in urban

areas focused on an analysis of the country's flagship social protection programme, Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP). The authors note that experience with urban social assistance programmes is still limited, and fewer poor households are reached by social protection in urban than in rural areas.


- > [Majoor, H., & Pelham, L. \(2018\). Using social protection mechanisms to respond to urban shocks. In *Humanitarian response in urban areas. Humanitarian Exchange*, 71. London: Humanitarian Practice Network, ODI.](#)


This article documents lessons from an attempt to use social protection approaches in a simulation exercise involving a large urban emergency in Dhaka. This experience revealed that 'much more research' is needed to understand the role of social protection in urban humanitarian crises. The authors caution that due to the required 'significant investment in time, capacity and financing... it is still unclear whether social protection can be responsive enough to meet the needs of large-scale, rapid-onset shocks in urban areas' (p. 32).

- > [Gentilini, U. \(2015\). *Entering the city: Emerging evidence and practices with safety nets in urban areas* \(Social Protection & Labor Discussion Paper 1504\). Washington, DC: World Bank.](#)

As the global urban population increases and poverty urbanises, there is an increased urgency to understand how to make safety nets work in urban settings. This paper discusses the process of urbanisation, the peculiar features of urban poverty, and emerging experiences with urban safety net programmes. It finds that urban areas pose fundamentally different sets of opportunities and challenges for social protection, and that safety net programmes are at the very beginning of a process of urban adaptation.

Other resources

-  [Gentilini, U. \(2015\). *What we know and need to know about safety net programmes in urban areas*. World Bank.](#)

-  [The Economist. \(2018\). *Extending the safety-net in Ethiopia. Ethiopia's scheme to help the poor is setting an example*.](#)

3.14 Digital social protection

Digital technologies are involved in different aspects of social protection delivery, the main ones being information systems, financial services, and grievance/accountability mechanisms.

Digital information systems

Much recent attention has been on digital management information systems (MIS) for social protection, defined as 'online platforms through which citizens can interact with welfare bureaucracies; automated systems which collect and analyze data to determine eligibility for social protection benefits; biometric identification of beneficiaries; and artificial intelligence tools to identify the risk of potential benefit fraud or to assess the need for social assistance'.¹⁴ An ever-increasing number of low- and middle-income countries are embarking on a process of integrating their management information systems (**Barca 2017: 2**). Full integration involves establishing 'a direct (web service) link – e.g. using each citizen's national ID number as a unique identifier – to (a) all social assistance program MISs; (b) social insurance MISs; (c) any other relevant government MIS' (**ibid.**). For example, Kenya's Single Registry consolidates information for five social assistance programmes (the Hunger Safety Net Programme; Persons with Severe Disability Programme; Older Persons Cash Transfer; Urban Food Subsidy Programme; and Orphans and Vulnerable Children Programme) on the key processes of '(i) targeting, registration and enrolment; (ii) payment; (iii) change management; (iv) complaints and grievances' (**Barca & Chirchir, 2014: 25**).

Digitalising social protection information has the potential to reduce fragmented, isolated social protection interventions, supporting a systems approach to universal social protection and linking social protection recipients to other services and support. ICT innovations can support more accurate and efficient service by automating and improving data management (reducing workloads and enabling more informed management decisions) and providing convenient, faster, and more secure service to beneficiaries (**Handayani et al., 2017**). However, trade-offs, challenges and risks can emerge, including increasing costs and complexity, risks to data privacy and security, and risks of multiple exclusion from all social sector schemes – as an integrated approach to intake/registration could lead to a systematic exclusion of certain households; for example, if there is a problem with data collection or administrative requirements such as the lack of an ID card (**Barca, 2017: 1, 53**). **Barca (2017: 43)** highlights that 'certain categories of data may be more contentious than others when it comes to data privacy and security concerns'. Information on citizens' identity, address, health, asset-holding and bank accounts (among other things) could easily be abused (whether obtained unduly by third parties or used unduly by government) if sufficient safeguards are not ensured (**ibid.**). Biometric-technology

data – such as fingerprints, iris structure and face topologies – can be uniquely sensitive. However, social protection programmes are often implemented without mechanisms to protect the rights of the individuals whose information is being collected or the data itself (**Sepúlveda Carmona, 2018: vii**).

Digital financial services

Digital financial services for social protection are 'delivered via digital infrastructure (mobile or Internet) with low use of traditional brick-and-mortar branch infrastructure. Digital financial services include the full range of products (digital transfers, payments, stored value, savings, insurance, credit, etc.), channels (such as mobile phones, Internet, or automated teller machines), and providers including mobile network operators, banks, nonbank financial institutions, and electronic money issuers, retailers, post offices, and others' (**ISPA, 2015: GN-95**).

Electronic payment delivery systems improve transparency and accountability and reduce leakage compared with cash-based manual mechanisms (**ibid.**: GN-52, 86). Digital payment services still require high-quality procedures and controls including management oversight and continual monitoring, both when delivered by government or programme staff and when outsourced to one or more third-party (private or public) payment service provider (PSP) (**ibid.**: GN-83, 86). A key recommendation is to build 'a data bridge' between the information system of a social protection intervention and any PSP, to prevent errors and fraud on payment lists (**ibid.**: GN-84) while ensuring data protection. Authentication of recipients must be secure (using a variety of methods), while noting that a highly secure payment mechanism may, as well as increasing costs for the government, increase cost of access for recipients (**ibid.**: GN-85). Approaches should be appropriate for the programme objectives and beneficiary profile: for example, PINs may be a new concept requiring beneficiary training while fingerprint biometrics may not be suitable for elderly people or manual labourers with worn fingerprints (**ibid.**) and ATMs may not be appropriate for visually impaired beneficiaries.

Digital grievance and accountability mechanisms

Barca and Chirchir (2014: 24) note that most social protection grievances are linked to programme targeting, and therefore 'it is essential to develop an integrated process for response that could be managed through a Single Registry and IMIS [integrated management information system]'.

¹⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Poverty/Pages/CallforinputGADigitalTechnology.aspx> (Accessed 8 May 2019).

Looking more broadly at the increasing use of new information and communications technology (ICT) to facilitate citizen feedback to state service providers, a review by the World Bank found that this ‘can make a technical contribution to increasing the capacity of policymakers and senior managers to respond to citizens, but only where the commitment to respond already exists’ (Ayliffe et al, 2017: 39 citing World Bank, 2016). Moreover, any move to digitalisation needs to consider that in some countries (e.g. in sub-Saharan Africa) there is a marked digital divide, with access depending on gender, income status, location and age (ibid.).

Key texts

- > **Barca, V. (2017). *Integrating data and information management for social protection: Social registries and integrated beneficiary registries*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.**
This report reviews recent evolutions in integrating data and information management for social protection, looking at shifts in terminology and innovative best practice, to provide practical guidance for policymakers and practitioners. The findings are based on a literature review of academic and grey literature on the topic; on extensive interviews and discussions with key informants; and on five in-depth case studies (Brazil, Chile, Indonesia, Kenya and Turkey).
- > **European Commission. (2017). *Peer review on ‘Social Protection Information System’: Synthesis report*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.**
Government representatives and independent experts from eight countries (Bulgaria, Finland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia and Spain), as well as representatives from the European Commission, discuss the current and future use of data and information management tools in the context of social protection policies and the challenges related to their implementation.
- > **Leite, P., George, T., Sun, C., Jones, T., & Lindert, K. (2017). *Social registries for social assistance and beyond: A guidance note and assessment tool* (Social Protection & Labor Discussion Paper 1704). Washington, DC: World Bank.**
This paper presents a ‘Guidance Note’ on the framework for social registries. It illustrates the diverse typologies and trajectories of country experiences with social registries with respect to their institutional arrangements (central and local); use as inclusion systems (coverage, single or




multi-programme use, static or dynamic intake and registration); and structure as information systems (structure of data management, degree and use of interoperability with other systems).

- > **ISPA. (2015). *Social protection payment delivery mechanisms*. Washington, DC: World Bank.**
This Inter Agency Social Protection Assessments (ISPA) tool ‘provides guidance on how to assess a payment mechanism for the delivery of cash or near-cash social protection transfers primarily targeted at poor and vulnerable populations’. It proposes three criteria to assess the quality of social protection payment delivery mechanisms or when designing new mechanisms: ‘accessibility, robustness, and integration’ (foreword).

See also:

- > **Sepúlveda Carmona, M. (2018). *Is biometric technology in social protection programmes illegal or arbitrary? An analysis of privacy and data protection*. Geneva: International Labour Office.**
- > **Handayani, S., Domingo-Palacpac, M., Lovelock, P., & Burkley, C. (2017). *Improving the delivery of social protection through ICT – Case studies in Mongolia, Nepal, and Viet Nam* (ADB Sustainable Development Working Paper 50). Manila: Asian Development Bank.**
- > **Rincón, T. (2017). *Digital inclusion for the ultra poor: The graduation approach. Policy in Focus 14(2)*, 52–57. Brasília: International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth.**
- > **Hosein, G., & Nyst, C. (2013). *Aiding surveillance: An exploration of how development and humanitarian aid initiatives are enabling surveillance in developing countries*. London: Privacy International.**

Other resources

-  **Information systems for the social protection sector social registries and beyond. (2017).** Oxford Policy Management, World Bank and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia). (1hr:42)
-  **‘APPTitude – A new way to battle extreme poverty’. Use of digital apps to support skills-based training for economic empowerment and graduation-style programmes. (2016).** Fundación Capital. (1m:44)
-  **Tying the digital knots: Social protection in practice. (2018).** Hochschule Bonn-Rhein-Sieg, University of Applied Sciences, Germany.