



Social Protection Topic Guide

Becky Carter,* Keetie Roelen,* Sue Enfield* and William Avis**

* Institute of Development Studies

** International Development Department, University of Birmingham

October 2019

About this report

The K4D Emerging Issues report series highlights research and emerging evidence to policymakers to help inform policies that are more resilient to the future. K4D staff researchers work with thematic experts and DFID to identify where new or emerging research can inform and influence policy.

This report is based on 36 days of desk-based research.

K4D services are provided by a consortium of leading organisations working in international development, led by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), with Education Development Trust, Itad, University of Leeds Nuffield Centre for International Health and Development, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM), University of Birmingham International Development Department (IDD) and the University of Manchester Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute (HCRI).

For any enquiries, please contact helpdesk@k4d.info.

Acknowledgements

This publication is a revised edition of this topic guide. The 2015 edition was written by Evie Browne for GSDRC as part of the DFID-funded PEAKS programme. Previous editions of this guide (2009–2012) were prepared by Zoë Scott, Huma Haider and Oliver Walton. We gratefully acknowledge the efforts of the authors of and contributors to all previous editions.

This edition was updated in 2019 by Becky Carter, Keetie Roelen, Sue Enfield and William Avis as part of the DFID-funded K4D programme. We thank the following

experts who voluntarily provided suggestions for relevant literature or other advice to support the preparation of this report. The content of the report does not necessarily reflect the opinions of any of the experts consulted.

- Valentina Barca, independent consultant
- Christina Behrendt, International Labour Organization (ILO)
- Deepta Chopra, IDS
- Sally Duncan, DFID
- Emily Henderson, DFID
- Roopa Hinton, DFID
- Lara Karat, DFID
- Heather Kindness, DFID
- Anna McCord, Overseas Development Institute
- Aude de Montesquiou, World Bank
- Clare O'Brien, World Food Programme
- Tia Maria Palermo, UNICEF
- Rachel Sabates-Wheeler, IDS
- David Stewart, UNICEF
- Veronika Wodsak, ILO

Suggested citation

Carter, B., Roelen, K., Enfield S. and Avis, W. (2019). *Social Protection Topic Guide*. Revised Edition. K4D Emerging Issues Report. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies.

Copyright

This report was prepared for the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID) and its partners in support of pro-poor programmes. It is licensed for non-commercial purposes only. K4D cannot be held responsible for errors or any consequences arising from the use of information contained in this report. Any views and opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of DFID, K4D or any other contributing organisation. © DFID – Crown copyright 2019.

Cover photograph: Mother with her children, Rwanda. © Heather Kindness.

Supported by



Key to multimedia resources listed in this report



Animation



Article/blog



Conference/Seminar/Webinar



Key resource



Podcast



Video

Contents

Executive summary

1 What is social protection?

- 1.1 Definitions
- 1.2 Objectives
- 1.3 Analytical concepts
- 1.4 Selected development partner positions

2 Types of social protection

- 2.1 Social assistance
- 2.2 Social insurance
- 2.3 Social care
- 2.4 Labour market policies and interventions
- 2.5 Traditional or informal social protection

3 Global issues and debates

- 3.1 Coverage, spend and systems
- 3.2 Financing, affordability and fiscal space
- 3.3 Political economy
- 3.4 State-building and citizenship
- 3.5 Targeting
- 3.6 Conditionality
- 3.7 Public works programmes
- 3.8 Graduation and cash plus
- 3.9 The future of work
- 3.10 Universal basic income
- 3.11 Humanitarian–social protection linkages
- 3.12 Climate resilience
- 3.13 Urban contexts
- 3.14 Digital social protection

4	4 Policy objectives and evidence of impacts	43
5	4.1 Poverty, inequality and vulnerability	43
5	4.2 Education	45
5	4.3 Health	46
5	4.4 Nutrition	48
5	4.5 Empowerment	50
9	4.6 Social exclusion	52
13	4.7 Economic growth	53
13	4.8 Employment	56
14	5 Vulnerable groups: Specific needs and challenges	58
15	5.1 Children	58
15	5.2 Women and girls	59
16	5.3 Older people	61
17	5.4 People with disabilities	62
17	6 Design and implementation guidance	65
20	6.1 General guidance and manuals	65
23	6.2 Financing	65
24	6.3 Value for money	65
25	6.4 Targeting	65
27	6.5 Conditionality	65
28	6.6 Payment	65
29	6.7 Accountability	66
32	6.8 Administrative systems	66
32	6.9 Monitoring and evaluation	66
33	6.10 Gender	66
34	6.11 Inclusion	66
37	6.12 Humanitarian–social protection linkages	67
40	6.13 Climate resilience	67
40	6.14 Public works	67
40	6.15 Graduation and cash plus	67

Executive summary

Social protection is commonly understood as:

“*All public and private initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalised; with the overall objective of reducing the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups.*”

(Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004: i)

This guide provides an overview of social protection concepts, approaches, issues, debates and evidence, and a selection of key references and signposting to further resources. It primarily focuses on longer-term developmental social protection rather than humanitarian responses, and on low-income countries, including in contexts of shocks, and draws on other income contexts where appropriate. It is not intended to be an exhaustive guide.

Key rationales for supporting social protection recur across the literature. Social protection can protect and promote human rights. Social protection is instrumental to the achievement of a broad range of development goals, including poverty reduction, education, health, nutrition, productivity, social inclusion, empowerment, equity, and state-building, among others.

There is well-documented evidence of the positive impacts of the progressive extension of social protection coverage on population wellbeing in multiple countries (ILO, 2017: 7). **Evidence** on social protection is extremely robust in some areas, and weaker in others. Social assistance interventions, in particular cash transfers, are well studied and there is rigorous evidence of what works. There is stronger evidence on poverty reduction, access to education and health services, food security and dietary diversity, and growing evidence on savings/productive investments, multiplier and labour effects. But there is less evidence on higher-order outcomes and medium- to longer-term

social development impacts such as maternal and newborn mortality rates, nutritional outcomes, and longer-term educational outcomes of learning and cognitive development. On longer-term impacts, one of the challenges is working out if the lack of evidence is because there is no impact or because of the methodological challenges of identifying long-term impacts (including a lack of longitudinal studies). The literature is in agreement that social protection has important developmental effects, but that alone it is typically insufficient to lift households out of poverty, with less evidence on transformative social outcomes, such as women’s empowerment (albeit with a growing evidence base) and social inclusion.

A major recent shift in thinking is away from fragmented social protection programmes towards **comprehensive social protection systems**. This has largely been driven by donors, who are now investing in supporting governments to build integrated social protection systems. It also ties to an increasing focus on fiscal space and domestic financing of social protection, to ensure secure and sustainable social protection systems over the long term. **Areas of debate remain**. These include targeting, conditionality, and graduation. The long-standing debate about targeting has re-emerged in light of increasing calls for universal social protection. In terms of conditionality, there is positive evidence for both unconditional and conditional transfers.

① What is social protection?

1.1 Definitions

Social protection is concerned with protecting and helping those who are poor, vulnerable, marginalised or dealing with risks. The risks can be idiosyncratic, affecting individuals or households, and can be associated with life cycle stages. Or they can be covariate (large-scale), affecting communities or regions due to climate, conflict or other stresses and shocks. Vulnerable groups helped by social protection include poor children, women, older people, and people living with disabilities, as well as the displaced, the unemployed, and the sick.

Social protection is commonly understood as ‘all public and private initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalised; with the overall objective of reducing the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups’ (**Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004**: i). This definition is in line with usage in international development and may be different from social policy definitions in high-income countries. Social protection consists of ‘a set of nationally-owned policies and programmes’ (**UNDP, 2016**: 12), usually provided by the state (through domestic resources, either contributions or tax finance), with support from international donors in particular for least developed and lower middle-income countries (**UN DESA, 2018**: 6). Social protection is theoretically conceived as part of the ‘state–citizen’ contract, in which states and citizens have rights and responsibilities to each other (**Harvey et al., 2007**).

There are ongoing debates about which interventions constitute social protection, as there can be some overlapping with a number of livelihoods, human capital and food security interventions (**ibid.**). Moreover, while there is wide agreement on the desirability of social protection provision in general, there is significant variation on what this means in practice in low- and middle-income countries – in terms of ‘for whom it should be provided, and how and in what form’ (**McCord, 2013**: vii).

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of social protection vary widely, from reducing poverty and vulnerability, building human capital, empowering women and girls, improving livelihoods, and responding to economic and other shocks. As a result, there is a great deal of variation in social protection approach, composition, and implementation (**UNDP, 2016**: 14).

Typical short-term objectives are to help people meet basic needs, smooth consumption and mitigate the immediate impact of shocks. Programmes can support a basic level of income for people living in poverty or prevent people from falling into poverty, or deeper into poverty, when they are affected by illness or drought, for example.

Other social protection objectives focus on longer-term development and supporting people to move permanently or stay out of poverty (**Babajanian et al., 2014**). Longer-term goals include improving opportunities for inclusive growth, human capital development, and social stability. Some social protection programmes intend to be transformative, supporting equity, empowerment and human rights. The potential of social protection to achieve social justice outcomes for marginalised social groups is increasingly recognised (**Jones & Shahrokh, 2013**: 1).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include social protection targets under Goals 1, 3, 5, 8 and 10 (see Table 1). Moreover, social protection is ‘a critical tool to simultaneously achieve progress in many fundamentally interlinked Goals and Targets’, as social protection has the potential to act on the multiple drivers of exclusion and deprivation (**UNDP, 2016**: 8–9).

1.3 Analytical concepts

There are several different conceptual approaches for framing social protection objectives. These have developed over time and have been taken up and promoted by different countries and international organisations. Each conceptualises potential impacts in different ways, including a focus on transformation, human capital formation, reduction of vulnerability, and securing human rights. Approaches often combine a variety of these elements but differ in primary focus.

Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler (2004) provide a most commonly used conceptual framework, which describes four social protection functions:

- **Protective:** providing relief from deprivation (e.g. income benefits, state pensions)
- **Preventative:** averting deprivation (e.g. social insurance, savings clubs)
- **Promotive:** enhancing incomes and capabilities (e.g. inputs, public works)
- **Transformative:** social equity and inclusion, empowerment and rights (e.g. labour laws).

Table 1. Social protection and the Sustainable Development Goals

1 No poverty	1.3 Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.
3 Good health and wellbeing	3.8 Achieve universal health-care coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.
5 Gender equality	5.4 Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure, and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.
8 Decent work and economic growth	8.5 By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.
10 Reduced inequalities	10.4 Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality.
<i>In addition social protection makes a direct contribution to:</i>	
1 No poverty	1.5 By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters.
2 Zero hunger	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition.
4 Quality education	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all.
13 Climate action	13.1 Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.

Source: [BMZ \(2017\)](#), adapted by DFID; [UN \(2015\)](#).

The first three functions (the three Ps) were originally conceptualised by the International Labour Organization (ILO). The addition of the transformative element positions social protection as a policy instrument that seeks to address structural causes of poverty by helping to rebalance unequal power relations, which cause vulnerabilities. In practice, social protection interventions usually cover multiple functions and objectives.

Another common framework is that social protection **reduces vulnerability and risk** by providing protection against shocks. This assumes that vulnerability to hazards constrains human and economic development ([Barrientos & Hulme, 2009](#)) and that risk management stabilises income and consumption, and is an investment in poverty reduction ([Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2007](#)). The World Bank's Social Risk Management framework first conceptualised the role of social protection in relation to risk ([Holzmann & Jørgensen, 2000](#); updated [Jørgensen & Siegel, 2019](#)).

Social protection can also be conceptualised as an **investment in human capital** which increases capacities and the accumulation of productive assets ([Barrientos, 2010](#)), breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Promotion of opportunities is one of three overarching goals for social protection in the World Bank's 2012–2022 Social Protection and Labour Strategy, highlighting social protection's role in human capital formation ([World Bank, 2012](#)). Social protection contributes to human capital either directly, by providing food, skills and services, or indirectly, by providing cash and access, which enable households to invest in their own development.

The recognition that social protection can **promote and protect human rights** is now widespread¹ ([UNDP, 2016: 11](#)). Social security (see [Section 2](#) for an explanation of the types of social protection) is a human right, as set out in the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) and the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) ([Sepúlveda & Nyst, 2012](#)). A human

¹Social security is explicitly mentioned in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Whether or not social protection is a human right is debated, as it is often defined more broadly; some agencies and stakeholders (such as the ILO) make explicit references to social protection as a human right while others refrain from doing so. In cases where social protection is referred to as a human right, it is reported as such in this report. Otherwise we understand social security is a human right, and social protection to stand in support of human rights.

rights-based approach underpins the United Nations' **Social Protection Floor Initiative** and forms the basis for the development of social protection systems in many low- and middle-income countries.

Most countries in Europe, Northern America and Latin America have established legal social protection entitlements for every citizen (**UN DESA, 2018: 8**). In many countries in Africa and Asia, 'legal coverage

is limited to a few areas and only a minority of the population has access to social protection schemes anchored in national legislation' (**UN DESA, 2018: 9**). There are exceptions in these regions: for example, India and South Africa recognise social protection as a human right and an entitlement (**UN DESA 2018: 9; UNRISD, 2016**; also see **UNRISD Social Protection and Human Rights Platform – resource on domestic legislation**).

BOX 1

Social protection in international rights agreements

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (*bold added*)

- Article 22: 'Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to **social security** and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.'
- Article 23: 'Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of **social protection**.'
- Article 25: 'Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same **social protection**.'

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (*bold added*)

- Article 9: 'The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to **social security**, including social insurance.'
- 'In General Comment No. 19 on the right to social security, the [Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights] spells out the key features of this right and the content of States' obligations. According to the Committee, the right to social security implies two predominant categories of measures: *social insurance* schemes, where beneficiaries are requested to contribute financially; and *social assistance* schemes, non-contributory and typically taxation-funded measures which are designed to transfer resources to groups deemed eligible due to vulnerability or deprivation' (**Sepúlveda & Nyst, 2012: 20**).

Other relevant international human rights instruments are: (first three summarised in **UNRISD, 2016: 2**)

- **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women** (*adopted 1979*) (**CEDAW**): Governments to introduce social benefits during maternity leave (Article 11) and ensure rural women receive social protection (Article 14).
- **Convention on the Rights of the Child** (*adopted 1989*) (**CRC**): Recognises every child's right to an adequate living standard for physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development (Article 27).
- **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (*adopted 2006*) (**CRPD**): Requires States recognise persons with disabilities' right to social protection without discrimination on the basis of ability (Article 28).
- **Convention relating to the Status of Refugees** (*adopted 1951*): Requires States to provide refugees and nationals the same treatment with respect to (for example): elementary education (Article 22); rationing where it exists (Article 20); and public relief and assistance (Article 23); among other provisions.

Moreover, social protection systems have the potential to contribute to the realisation of other economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to education, health and an adequate standard of living (food, clothing and housing) (**Sepúlveda and Nyst, 2012: 23**).

Table 2 summarises recent approaches to social protection and offers critiques.

Table 2. Analytical approaches to social protection

Approach	Critique
<p>In the early 2000s, the “Social Risk Management” framework provided a more coherent way of analysing risks and formulating appropriate “reduction”, “mitigation”, or “coping” responses’ (HLPE, 2012: 25).</p>	<p>It was critiqued for ‘ignoring social risks and structural causes of poverty and food insecurity – and a definition of vulnerability suggesting a bias to people at risk of future poverty, rather than those already living in poverty’ (HLPE, 2012: 25).</p>
<p>Transformative Social Protection ‘sees poverty and vulnerability as symptoms of social injustice and argues social protection should address their structural causes – including social risks such as discrimination and disempowerment – by transforming social and political conditions generating poverty and vulnerability (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004). Transformative social protection has been adapted by numerous agencies and governments for their social protection strategies and policies...’ (HLPE, 2012: 25)</p>	<p>It has been criticised for ‘extending the boundaries of social protection into broader development policy arenas’ (HLPE, 2012: 25), potentially undermining the effectiveness of the core objectives of poverty reduction and risk management.</p>
<p>Launched in 2009, the Social Protection Floor ‘is an initiative led by the United Nations that is the first systematic attempt to operationalise a rights-based approach to social protection.... Like “transformative social protection”, the “social protection floor” is predicated on the normative belief that social protection should reflect a social contract between governments as duty-bearers and citizens or residents as rights-holders’ (HLPE, 2012: 25–26).</p> <p>The 2012 ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation (No. 202) provides guidance to members on establishing and maintaining nationally defined sets of basic social security guarantees. The focus on floors (plural) refers to national adaptations of the global approach to country-specific circumstance (ILO, 2011: 6).</p>	<p>It has been critiqued for applying a ‘one-size-fits-all’ model and pushing an agenda of universality that overlooks fiscal and political considerations at country level:</p> <p>‘[T]he staircase model proposes as sole option for expanding the system an obligatory sequence of mandatory social insurance followed by voluntary insurance, whereas in fact alternative approaches for expanding the system and including better-off members of society (e.g. taxation) could be explored, depending on the country’s particular situation’ (Ulrichs & White-Kaba, 2019: 9).</p>
<p>In 2015 the ILO and the World Bank released a joint statement promoting universal social protection, followed in 2016 by the launch of the Universal Social Protection 2030 Initiative by the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection (ILO, World Bank and broader membership including other bilateral and multilateral agencies).</p> <p>Universal social protection (USP) refers to ‘a nationally defined system 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.’² The USP 2030 initiative calls for a global push towards achieving universal social protection by 2030, which encompasses but is not exclusive to social protection floors.</p> <p>Shared fundamental characteristics of country pathways to USP are: ‘equitable access to comprehensive risk coverage through a coherent system’ (the goal); ‘nationally led and tailored to the population’s specific needs’ (the approach); and ‘capacity for adjustment and expansion’ (the design) (Ulrichs & White-Kaba, 2019: 4).</p>	<p>Although many governments and development partners agree with the principle of achieving USP by 2030, the initiative may be considered highly aspirational given fiscal and other constraints in many countries.</p>

Source: Summarised and adapted from HLPE (2012: 25–26); updated with Ulrichs and White-Kaba (2019: 4).

² <https://www.usp2030.org/gimi/USP2030.action> (Accessed 4 March 2019).

Key texts

- > Ulrichs, M. & White-Kaba, M. (2019). *A systems perspective on Universal Social Protection – Towards life-long equitable access to comprehensive social protection for all*. Bonn & Berlin: BMZ.

This discussion paper details how USP focuses on how to establish 'one coherent, comprehensive social protection system that covers all people for all risks' (p. 5). It charts how USP emerged as an initiative and sets out a systems perspective to enablers for and approaches to USP. It concludes with a set of key questions, which include asking whether the USP2030 goal (SDG 1.3) is realistic, how USP can be provided in low- and middle-income countries to informal workers, and if having the official shared USP2030 agenda has improved development partner coordination (among others).

- > McCord, A. (2013). *The public pursuit of secure welfare: Background paper on international development institutions, social protection & developing countries*. London: ODI.

This paper sets out the post-MDG debate, providing an overview of the historical, institutional and political factors that helped shape the future development goals and the role of social protection within them. It summarises how key international development institutions' conceptual framework for social protection programming and policy developed.

- > HLPE. (2012). *Social protection for food security. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, Rome*.

This report provides a clear framework for the range of social protection responses to food insecurity. It reviews evidence and experience, proposing recommendations for using social protection more effectively to protect and promote food security.

- > Devereux, S. & Sabates-Wheeler, R. (2004). *Transformative social protection*. (IDS Working Paper 232). Brighton: IDS.

This paper outlines the transformative framework for social protection, which can achieve any of the four objectives: Protective: providing relief from deprivation; Preventative: averting deprivation; Promotive: enhancing incomes and capabilities; Transformative: social equity and inclusion, empowerment and rights. It argues against the welfarist approach to social protection and posits that social protection can achieve more than economic security.

See also:

- > UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) (2018). *Promoting Inclusion through Social Protection. Report on the World Social Situation 2018*. United Nations.

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

- > White, P. (2016). *Social protection systems*. (GSDRC Professional Development Reading Pack 49). Birmingham: University of Birmingham.

- > UNRISD. (2016). *The human rights-based approach to social protection*. (Issue Brief 02). United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

- > Sepúlveda, M., & Nyst, C. (2012). *The human rights approach to social protection*. Helsinki: Ministry for Foreign Affairs (Finland).


Other resources

-  [USP 2030 website](#)

-  [Extending social protection in Asia and the Pacific](#). (2018). UN ESCAP. (2m:36)

-  [Why do we need social protection?](#) (2018). UN ESCAP. (3m:04)

-  [Social protection in East Africa – Harnessing the future](#). East African challenges and an overview of social protection objectives. (2017). Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), European Union, & Government of Finland. (2m:22)

-  ['Building social protection floors together with development partners'](#). (2017). ILO. (2m:51)

-  ['The human rights-based approach to social protection'](#). (2013). UNRISD. (36m:55)

1.4 Selected development partner positions

Development partners – bilateral donors and multilateral agencies, including United Nations agencies and multilateral financial institutions – engage in social protection in different ways, applying different emphases that reflect their individual mandate (**Devereux & Roelen, 2016**: 1). For instance, 'the World Bank focuses on social protection as a means of reducing poverty and enhancing pro-poor economic growth, UNICEF sees it as a tool for achieving child wellbeing and children's rights, while the ILO emphasises the right to social security and extending coverage to all' (*ibid.*). For an explanation of the terms used in this section for the different types of social protection – see **Section 2: Types of social protection**.

Multilaterals

European Union (EU)

The EU promotes a basic level of social protection, as a right for all, and especially for children, vulnerable persons in active working age, and the elderly.³ The European Commission views social protection as helping reduce poverty and vulnerability and underpinning inclusive and sustainable development. The EU is committed to supporting nationally owned social protection policies, and to working with civil society and the private sector as well as the government in its partner countries (Devereux & Roelen, 2016: 3–4). In 2017, the Council of the EU adopted conclusions recognising the connections between sustainable development, humanitarian action, and conflict prevention and peace-building. The conclusions highlight the importance of coordinating humanitarian and development actions to ‘address the underlying root causes of vulnerability, fragility and conflict while simultaneously meeting humanitarian needs and strengthening resilience’ (Council of the EU, 2017: 2).

- **Council of the European Union. (2017).** *Operationalising the humanitarian-development Nexus – Council conclusions (19 May 2017)*. Brussels.
- **EC. (2012).** *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions: Social protection in European Union Development Cooperation*. Brussels: European Commission.

International Labour Organization (ILO)

Social protection is a core pillar of the ILO mandate on social justice and decent work. The ILO’s Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), and other international social security standards are at the heart of the UN’s work of supporting countries to turn the human right to social protection into reality. As the UN agency with the mandate to work on social protection, the ILO is (co-) leading several multi-partner initiatives, including the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection (USP2030), the Social Protection Floors Initiative, the Social Protection Interagency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B), and the Interagency Social Protection Assessment tools (ISPA tools). Through its World Social Protection Database, the ILO tracks country progress towards SDG 1.3, whereby countries committed to implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors. The ILO World Social Protection Report

2017–19 provides a comprehensive analysis of country progress in building their social protection systems, including floors, and to ensure effective access to adequate social protection for all.

- **Flagship report: ILO. (2017).** *World social protection report 2017–19: Universal social protection to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals*. Geneva: ILO.
- **Strategy document: ILO. (2012).** *Social security for all: Building social protection floors and comprehensive social security systems*. Geneva: ILO.

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

The IMF did not engage directly with social protection until recently (Barrientos & Hulme, 2009). In the wake of the global financial crisis, it has supported spending on social safety nets in select countries (IMF, 2019). The IMF approaches social protection from the lens of it being an ‘important contributor to macroeconomic stability’, as ‘maintaining social and political support for sustainable macroeconomic policies can depend crucially on avoiding excessive stress on vulnerable groups’ (Independent Evaluation Office (IEO), 2017: 1). In 2018, it produced a guidance note on IMF engagement on social safeguards in low-income countries in both programme and surveillance contexts. Social safeguards comprise: (i) commitments to social (education, health, social protection) and other priority spending that supports national poverty reduction and growth strategies; and (ii) ‘Specific reforms designed to protect poor and vulnerable groups, for instance by strengthening social safety nets and improving the tracking and monitoring of spending on such groups’ (IMF, 2018: 3).

- **IMF. (2018).** *Guidance note on IMF engagement on social safeguards in low-income countries*. Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund.
- **IEO. (2017).** *The IMF and social protection*. Independent Evaluation Office of the International Monetary Fund.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

UNDP views social protection as a key tool to transform its strategic vision ‘to help countries achieve the simultaneous eradication of poverty and significant reduction of inequalities and exclusion’ into reality, as stated in its Strategic Plan 2014–2017 (UNDP, 2014: 11). UNDP defines social protection as ‘a set of nationally owned policies and instruments that provide income support and facilitate access to goods and services by all households and individuals at least at minimally

³ https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sectors/human-development/social-protection_en (Accessed 25 February 2019).

accepted levels, to protect them from deprivation and social exclusion, particularly during periods of insufficient income, incapacity or inability to work' (UNDP, 2016: 12). UNDP (2016: 21) sets out six guiding principles for social protection: protect and promote human rights; ensure non-discrimination; foster gender equality and women's empowerment; be risk-informed and sensitive to environmental concerns; provide a continuum of protection; and promote universality.

- UNDP. (2016). *Leaving no one behind: A social protection primer for practitioners*. New York: United Nations Development Programme.
- UNDP. (2014). *Changing with the world: UNDP Strategic Plan 2014–17*. New York: United Nations Development Programme.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

UNICEF's first global social protection framework (2012)

made the case for child-sensitive social protection, arguing for the expansion of inclusive, integrated social protection systems. **UNICEF has recently updated this framework (2019)**. Its work on social protection builds from the reality that children are significantly more likely to live in poverty than adults and face a range of additional vulnerabilities, with huge implications for children themselves but also societies more broadly. With the growing body of evidence on the impacts of social protection on children, UNICEF's objective regarding social protection is to address child poverty and vulnerability, and ultimately transform the lives of children and families. For UNICEF, focusing on economic vulnerability is insufficient and its work includes a strong focus on social vulnerabilities, particularly children who are socially and economically vulnerable at the same time. The updated framework outlines an overall rights-based approach to child-sensitive social protection with a foundation of evidence at policy level (policy, legislation and financing); programme level (social transfers; social insurance; labour and jobs; social service workforce); and administrative level (administration and integrated service delivery). Across all of these levels, UNICEF is increasingly recognising that social protection has a vital role to play in supporting children living in fragile and humanitarian contexts and ensuring systems are shock responsive.

- UNICEF. (2019a). *UNICEF's Global Social Protection Programme Framework*, New York: UNICEF.
- UNICEF. (2019b). *A companion guidance to UNICEF's Global Social Protection Programme Framework*, New York: UNICEF
- UNICEF. (2012). *Integrated social protection systems: Enhancing equity for children – UNICEF Social Protection Strategic Framework*. New York: UNICEF.

World Bank

The World Bank's 2012–2022 Social Protection and Labour Strategy has the main objective of helping countries move from fragmented approaches to harmonised systems. The overarching goals of the strategy are to help improve resilience to shocks, improve equity by reducing poverty and promoting equality of opportunities, and promote opportunity by building human capital, assets, and access to jobs for people in low- and middle-income countries (World Bank, 2012: 1). The World Bank regards social protection as a poverty reduction tool, consistently linking social protection to labour markets and pro-poor employment (Devereux & Roelen, 2016: 2).

In 2019, the World Bank issued an update to its Social Risk Management (SRM) conceptual framework – the foundation of the World Bank's first Social Protection Sector Strategy in 2001 (Jorgensen & Siegel, 2019). This update identifies that the 'increasingly risky and uncertain world' with disruptions driven by technology, markets and climate change among others, requires 'a greater focus on asset and livelihood building programs in addition to traditional poverty alleviation and risk sharing programs, better integration between rights-based and risk-based approaches, more inclusive targeting, and consideration of global social protection' (ibid.: abstract).

- Jorgensen, S. L., & Siegel, P. B. (2019). *Social protection in an era of increasing uncertainty and disruption: Social Risk Management 2.0 (English) (Social Protection & Jobs Discussion Paper 1930)*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.
- World Bank. (2012). *Resilience, equity, and opportunity: The World Bank's social protection and labor strategy 2012–2022 (English)*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Bilaterals

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) (Australian government)

Social protection is identified as one of the six priorities for the Australian aid programme, as part of its focus on building resilience (DFAT, 2015). The Australian government primarily supports work on social assistance as its focus 'is normally on the poor and vulnerable' (ibid.: 3). Australian investment focuses on helping 'improve partner government systems to more effectively distribute their own funds' (ibid.: 2). DFAT's three strategic objectives are to: '(1) improve social protection coverage in the Indo-Pacific, (2) improve the quality of social protection systems, and (3) enhance partner governments' ability to make their own informed choices about social protection options' (ibid.).

- **DFAT. (2015).** *Strategy for Australia's aid investments in social protection*. Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Department for International Development (DFID) (UK government)

DFID's work on social protection helps deliver its strategic objectives to 'Tackle extreme poverty and help the world's most vulnerable' and 'Strengthen resilience and response to crises' (DFID 2019). DFID works with governments to build inclusive and sustainable social protection systems, with a primary focus on social assistance. Priorities are: investing in systems to increase their coverage, quality and sustainability; building systems that strengthen resilience and can respond to crises; and building more inclusive systems, focusing particularly on girls and women, people with disabilities, and the poorest and most vulnerable in protracted crises and in fragile states (DFID 2016).

- **DFID. (2019).** *Department for International Development single departmental plan*.
- **DFID. (2016).** *Rising to the challenge of ending poverty: The bilateral development review 2016*. Department for International Development.

Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) (German government)

BMZ promotes social protection as a human right, to reduce poverty and inequality. It focuses on building 'strong systems that reach everyone, including the most vulnerable... strengthening their resilience and

their capacity to help themselves' (BMZ, 2017: 3). Social protection is seen as an investment that benefits society at large, fostering sustainable economic development (ibid.). Germany's social protection work focuses on three areas: '(1) social assistance to reduce or prevent poverty and eradicate hunger; (2) social health protection to prevent impoverishment and foster health; and (3) insurance schemes to improve preparedness and cope with new challenges such as extreme weather events caused by climate change' (ibid.: 5).

- **BMZ. (2017).** *Social protection for equitable development* (BMZ Position Paper). Bonn & Berlin: Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Irish Aid

Irish Aid is committed to supporting social protection as 'a key instrument for reducing poverty and inequality while achieving inclusive growth' (Irish Aid, 2017: 6). Irish Aid's 2017 Social Protection Strategy identifies three principles for its work on social protection, to: strengthen social protection as an important and effective policy instrument; provide long-term system building support; and promote supportive policies and programmes (ibid.: 26).

- **Irish Aid. (2017).** *Social Protection Strategy*.

See also:

- **Devereux, S., & Roelen, K. (2016).** *Agency positions on social protection* (SDC-IDS Briefing Note 2). Brighton: IDS.

2 Types of social protection

Social protection includes:

- **Social assistance** – non-contributory transfers in cash, vouchers, or in-kind (including school feeding) to individuals or households in need ([White, 2016](#): 1); public works programmes; fee waivers (for basic health and education services); and subsidies (e.g. for food, fuel).
- **Social insurance** – ‘contributory schemes providing compensatory support in the event of contingencies such as illness, injury, disability, death of a spouse or parent, maternity/paternity, unemployment, old age, and shocks affecting livestock/crops’ ([ibid.](#)).
- **Social care services** ‘for those facing social risks such as violence, abuse, exploitation, discrimination and social exclusion’ ([ibid.](#)).
- **Labour market programmes** – ‘active (promoting labour market participation) or passive (ensuring minimum employment standards)’ ([ibid.](#)).

Social assistance and social insurance together constitute ‘social security’, a term often used by ILO and other UN bodies interchangeably with social protection ([Sepúlveda & Nyst, 2012](#): 20–21; [ILO, 2017](#)).

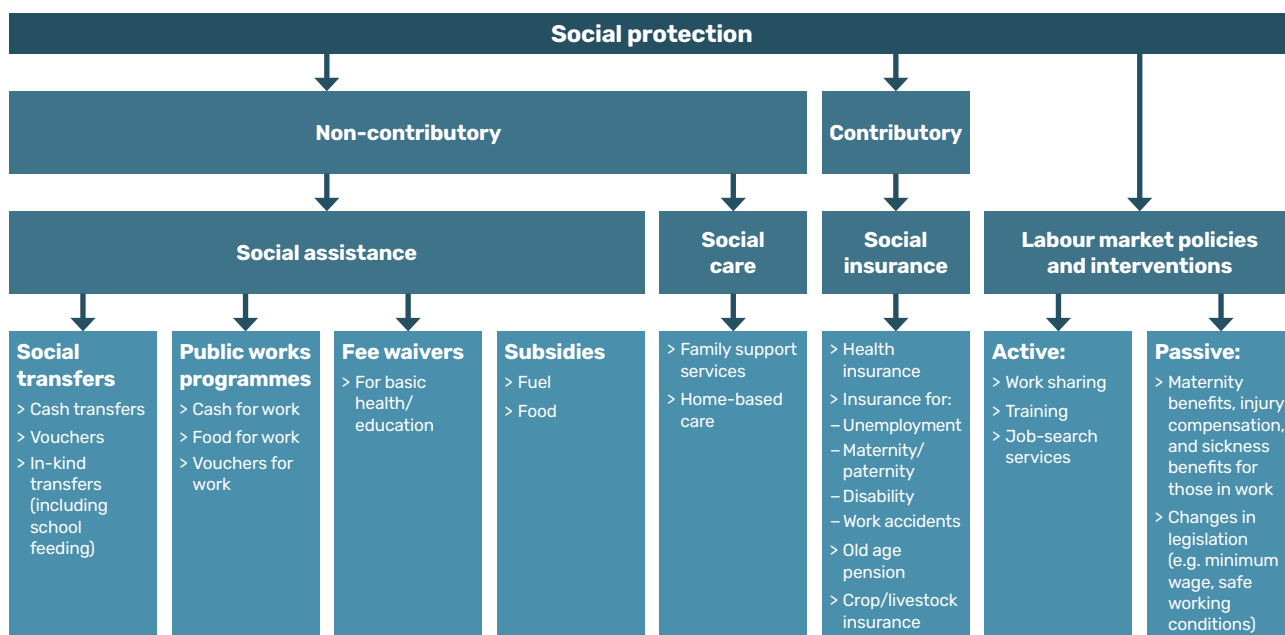
This section explores these categories, and also looks at **traditional or informal social protection**. Figure 1 shows a taxonomy of social protection instruments adapted from [O’Brien et al. \(2018\)](#): 6).

2.1 Social assistance

Social assistance is defined as non-contributory interventions (i.e. the full amount is paid by the provider) designed to help individuals and households cope with poverty, destitution, and vulnerability. These programmes target the poor and vulnerable. Some are targeted based on categories of vulnerability, and some are targeted to low-income households. They are usually provided by the state and financed by national taxes ([Barrientos, 2010](#)). Support from donors is also important in lower-income contexts. This is the primary form of social protection available in most developing countries ([ibid.](#)). Examples include unconditional and conditional cash transfers, non-contributory social pensions, food and other in-kind transfers, school feeding programmes, public works programmes, and fee waivers ([World Bank, 2018b](#): 5).

Another term, ‘social safety nets’ (sometimes known as ‘safety nets’), is used by the World Bank interchangeably with social assistance ([World Bank, 2018b](#)). However, for other development actors, safety nets denote a more short-term and/or emergency-focused form of social protection, particularly to help people meet immediate basic needs in times of crisis. For consistency, when including findings from World Bank resources on ‘social safety nets’, the term ‘social assistance’ is used throughout this report.

Figure 1. Taxonomy of social protection instruments



Notes: (1) ‘Non-contributory’ schemes are defined by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) as those that, ‘normally require no direct (financial) contribution from beneficiaries or their employers as a condition of entitlement to receive benefits’ (ILO, 2017). Public works programmes are usually counted as ‘non-contributory’ even though the recipient contributes labour. (2) Social transfers may be conditional or unconditional. A conditional transfer requires the recipient to meet certain behaviours (such as ensuring school attendance) to receive the benefit. Source: Adapted from [O’Brien et al. \(2018\)](#): 6).

Cash transfers are direct, regular and predictable transfers, increasingly paid through secure electronic systems, such as directly into bank accounts, mobile phone accounts, or on smart cards. They have the twin-track objective of providing immediate relief and reducing poverty, as well as contributing to increased resilience of poor households by enabling them to save, invest and cope better with risks and shocks. Cash transfers may take different forms: simple transfers, transfers conditional upon certain requirements, and transfers combined with the provision of or linkages to other services:

- **Unconditional cash transfers (UCTs)** do not have any requirements in terms of how they are spent or any conditions for when they are received. They are implemented both at national level by governments and at smaller scale by NGOs (HLPE, 2012).
- **Conditional cash transfers (CCTs)** are given with the requirement that the beneficiary meets certain conditions – often related to human capital development, such as visiting a health clinic or ensuring children go to school. In this way, CCTs aim to reduce both short-term food insecurity and the long-term intergenerational transmission of poverty and vulnerability (HLPE, 2012: 14; World Bank, 2018b: 7).
- **Cash plus programmes** combine cash transfers with one or more types of complementary support, based on the understanding that ‘cash alone cannot alleviate non-financial and structural barriers to improving living standards and well-being’ (Roelen et al., 2017). These are a fairly new wave of interventions that have expanded in the past few years. They tend to focus either on improving human development and human capital outcomes (e.g. improving nutrition, reproductive health, reducing violence against women and girls) 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.
- **In-kind assistance** includes school feeding, which is a free nutritious meal at school – usually lunch – and sometimes take-home rations for children most in need. School feeding programmes aim both to reduce hunger and improve food security, as well as increase school attendance and learner performance (HLPE, 2012).

Social (non-contributory) pensions are direct, regular and predictable payments made to people above a certain age, and often constitute state pensions.

Public works programmes (PWP)s are activities which entail the payment of a wage (in cash or food), often but not always by the state, in return for the provision of labour. The aim is to enhance employment and produce a physical or social asset, with the overall objective of promoting social protection. They are sometimes classified as labour market interventions depending on whether their function is primarily poverty alleviation or job creation. Sometimes referred to as public employment programmes (PEP) defined as ‘programmes creating state sponsored employment which is not market based (known as Public Works Programmes, Workfare, Welfare to Work, Cash for Work, Employment of Last Resort, Employment Guarantee programmes, etc.)’ (McCord, 2018: 10).

Graduation programmes provide a sequenced package of support – including cash transfers, asset transfers, access to savings and credit, and training and coaching – for a limited period of time with the aim of strengthening livelihoods and promoting a sustainable move out of poverty. These programmes are primarily productivity focused and target households with labour capacity. Graduation programmes have expanded rapidly in the last decade and are currently in place in more than 43 countries (Arévalo et al., 2018). Given their intensity of support and high cost, most programmes are currently implemented by NGOs (ibid.).

Fee waivers usually subsidise services for the poor while **subsidies** are used to keep prices low for certain goods and services (World Bank, 2018b: 38). Examples include: health insurance exemptions, reduced medical fees; education fee waivers; food subsidies; housing subsidies and allowances; utility and electricity subsidies and allowances; agricultural inputs subsidies; and transportation benefits (ibid.: 7). While common, they tend to have limited coverage of the poorest quintile – 13%, on average, in the sample of 82 countries in the World Bank ASPIRE database that have information on fee waivers and subsidies (ibid.: 38). The World Bank report cautions this is likely to be a considerable underestimate as it is hard to capture this data through household surveys. Nonetheless, subsidies are often regressive: ‘The rich often capture more benefits from state-funded price subsidies, as they consume more fuel and related products’ (Canonge, 2015: 2).

2.2 Social insurance

Social insurance programmes are contributory schemes where participants make regular payments to a scheme that will cover costs related to life-course events (Barrientos, 2010). Sometimes costs

are matched or subsidised by the insurance scheme provider. They include old-age, survivor and disability pensions; unemployment, sickness/injury, and health insurance; and maternity/paternity benefits ([UNDP, 2016](#): 35; [World Bank, 2018b](#): 5). The benefits can be paid through a bank or employer, or informally through a community-based pooled fund.

There are various forms of social health insurance. 'National or social health insurance (SHI) is based on individuals' mandatory enrolment' ([Spaan et al., 2012](#): 685). Voluntary mechanisms include private health insurance (PHI), which is implemented on a large scale in Brazil, Chile, Namibia and South Africa, and community-based health insurance (CBHI) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Rwanda and Senegal ([ibid.](#)).

There are ongoing efforts to increase the coverage of social insurance beyond the formal labour market to cover informal workers (the majority of the working-age population in most low- and middle-income countries ([Holmes and Scott, 2016](#): iv)) and other marginalised and vulnerable groups who have tended to be excluded from formal schemes. These efforts include:

- 1 Non-contributory universal programmes – for example social pensions, universal health insurance and unemployment assistance, which are financed out of general taxation.
- 2 Parallel schemes – for example, Tunisia has different pension programmes for public and private sector workers, while Mexico has separate contributory and non-contributory health insurance schemes with eligibility dependent on an individual's labour market status.
- 3 Nationally integrated pensions with explicit subsidies – for example, Chile's pension system ([Winkler et al., 2017](#): 8).

[Winkler et al. \(2017: 20\)](#) conclude that integrated social insurance systems combining 'an actuarially fair contributory system with explicit subsidies for the poor and informal seem to be more financially sustainable than universal non-contributory systems, and less distortionary than fragmented parallel schemes'.

Some countries combine funding from contributions and taxation to achieve universal coverage. For example, in Mongolia self-employed and informal herders can elect to join the social insurance scheme to receive maternity cash benefits, on top of which the Social Welfare Scheme provides a maternity payment to all pregnant women and mothers of infants regardless of social insurance contributions, employment status, or nationality ([ILO, 2017](#): 39).

2.3 Social care

Social care and support is highly complementary to social protection, and is sometimes classified as social protection. Economically and socially vulnerable people have complex challenges. Providing the appropriate support requires direct outreach to assess challenges faced and required responses, which 'may range from psycho-social support to connections to needed services' ([UNICEF, 2019a](#): 57). UNICEF considers 'outreach, case management and referral services integral to effective child sensitive social protection' ([ibid.](#): 37). Such services 'allow the range of needs of families to be understood and families connected to relevant services, including those such as violence prevention that may fall out of the social protection sphere' ([ibid.](#)).

2.4 Labour market policies and interventions

Labour market policies and interventions provide protection for poor people who are able to work and aim to ensure basic standards and rights ([Barrientos, 2010](#)). These government-led policies and interventions can be contributory or non-contributory, active (helping people acquire skills and connect them to labour markets), or passive (helping protect people against loss of income from unemployment, underemployment, diminishing real wages, and precarious and informal employment) ([World Bank, 2018b](#): 5, 6; [ILO, 2017](#): 24).

Active labour market policies and interventions aim to help the unemployed and the most vulnerable find jobs. Traditionally, this includes interventions such as '(i) matching jobseekers with current vacancies; (ii) upgrading and adapting jobseekers' skills; (iii) providing employment subsidies; and (iv) creating jobs either through public sector employment or the provision of subsidies for private sector work' ([ILO, 2017](#): 40). In high-income countries, such policies mostly extend to formal workers. In developing countries – with labour markets characterised by higher informality and lower unemployment than in higher-income countries – active labour market policies often include anti-poverty measures and blend interventions ([Malo, 2018](#): 3). For example, training programmes may be accompanied by public works and some type of income support, or employment subsidies may be aimed at hiring participants targeted by cash transfer programmes who are at risk of poor labour market outcomes such as underemployment and/or informality ([ibid.](#)). There is sometimes an overlap in classifying active labour market activities with public works and graduation programmes.

Passive labour market policies include legislation to underpin maternity benefits as well as wider rules regarding parental leave (period, who can take it, etc.), injury compensation, early retirement incentives, and sickness benefits for those already in work, financed by the employer. Passive interventions also include changes to legislation, for example establishing a minimum wage or safe working conditions. These interventions are primarily aimed at those working in the formal sector. Many poor people work within the informal sector, particularly in developing countries, and some people with disabilities, the chronically ill, and the old may not be able to work at all, so labour market interventions cannot always reach them. There is an overlap in classifying passive labour market activities with social insurance mechanisms (e.g. unemployment insurance is an example of a passive labour market policy).

2.5 Traditional or informal social protection

'Informal social protection draws on traditional coping strategies, social capital and community-based actions' (Twigg, 2015: 187). Community-based forms of social protection are usually defined as 'an informal grouping of activities that protect community members from risk through "locally arranged social protection measures that are predicated on people's cultural beliefs, norms and value"' (UNDP, 2016: 48, citing Mupedziswa & Ntseane 2013). They can include community-based 'funeral insurance services, village grain banks, rotating services and credit groups, [and] community-based health insurance' (UNDP, 2016: 36). They are often self-funded. They can be effective at local level, providing an important source of security, but they may have limited outreach, as different groups will have access to different social and political networks and sources of support (Twigg, 2015: 197).

Community approaches to social protection can also be supported by the state and donors, such as with village savings and loan associations (see, for example, Ksoll et al., 2016; Flora et al., 2015) and community-based health insurance services (see, for example, Yilma et al., 2015). With external support, the schemes can evolve from 'pure' forms of voluntary membership and community management to mandatory enrolment and other external influences (Chemouni, 2018). Sometimes state and donor-supported social protection schemes attempt to support or encourage localised community-based approaches. For example,

the Yemen Social Fund for Development – set up in 1997 by the government and supported by donors – works directly with local communities, establishing community contributions and participation (Al-Iryani et al., 2015).

Key texts

(See summaries in [Section 3.1: Coverage, spend and systems – Key texts.](#))

- > World Bank. (2018b). *The state of social safety nets 2018*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- > ILO. (2017). *World social protection report 2017–19: Universal social protection to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals*. Geneva: ILO.
- > UNDP. (2016). *Leaving no one behind. A social protection primer for practitioners*. New York: United Nations Development Programme.

See page 13 for a taxonomy of social protection instruments.

- > Barrientos, A. (2010). *Social protection and poverty (Social Policy and Development Programme Paper 42)*. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. What is the potential for social protection programmes to address poverty and vulnerability in developing countries? This comprehensive report provides an overview of social protection and an assessment of its impact in Latin America, South and East Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. Countries with stronger social protection show lower levels of poverty and vulnerability and are more resilient in the face of social and economic change or shock. However, financial sustainability and capacity limitations are challenges that must be addressed. It is helpful to view social protection financing as a 'remix' of public expenditure rather than a new expense.

See also:

- > Twigg, J. (2015). Livelihoods and DRR. In Twigg, J., *Disaster risk reduction. Good Practice Review 9* (pp. 169–188). London: ODI.

Other resources

-  'Social protection. With examples of passive labour market policies'. (2018). European Parliament. (5m:36)

3 Global issues and debates

3.1 Coverage, spend and systems

Coverage and spend

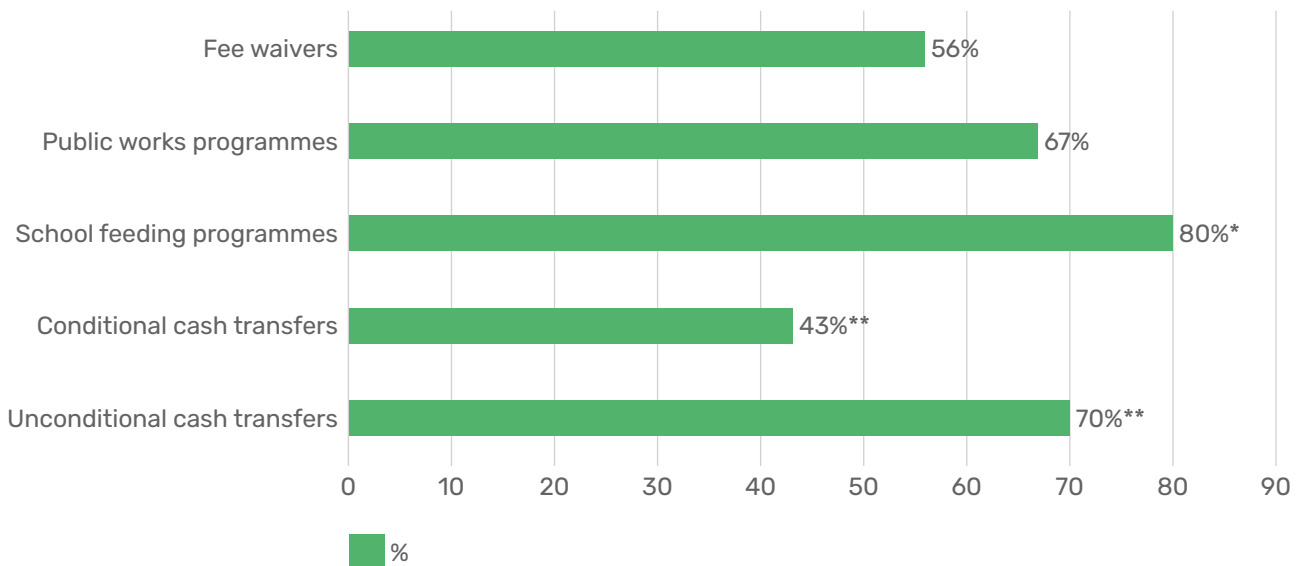
The last 20 years have seen a huge increase in social protection programmes, both in the number of programmes and number of countries with programmes (Gentilini et al., 2014). Much of this expansion is accounted for by social assistance and particularly cash transfer programmes (Bastagli et al., 2016: 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 Database⁴). 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).

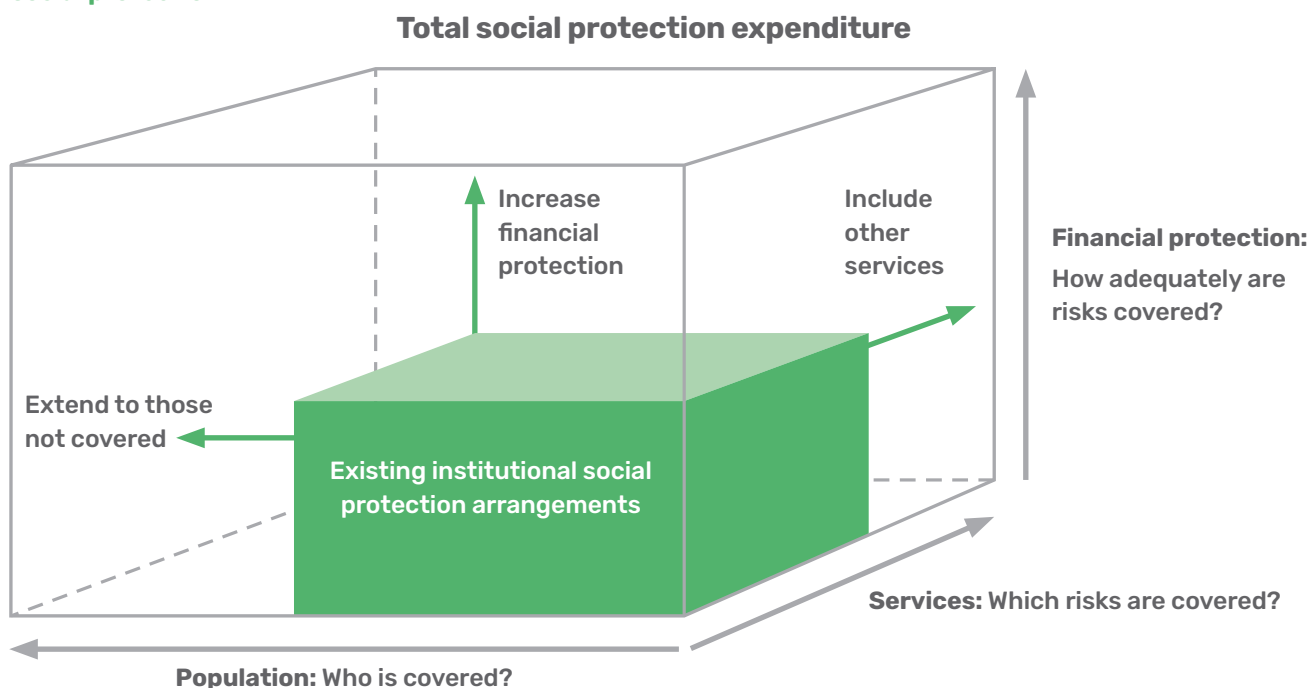
non-contributory (mostly tax-financed) social assistance to cover the needs of people living in poverty (*ibid.*).

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., & Pulk, 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 & Athias, 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 Lintel, 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. \(2018\). *Humanitarian 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.

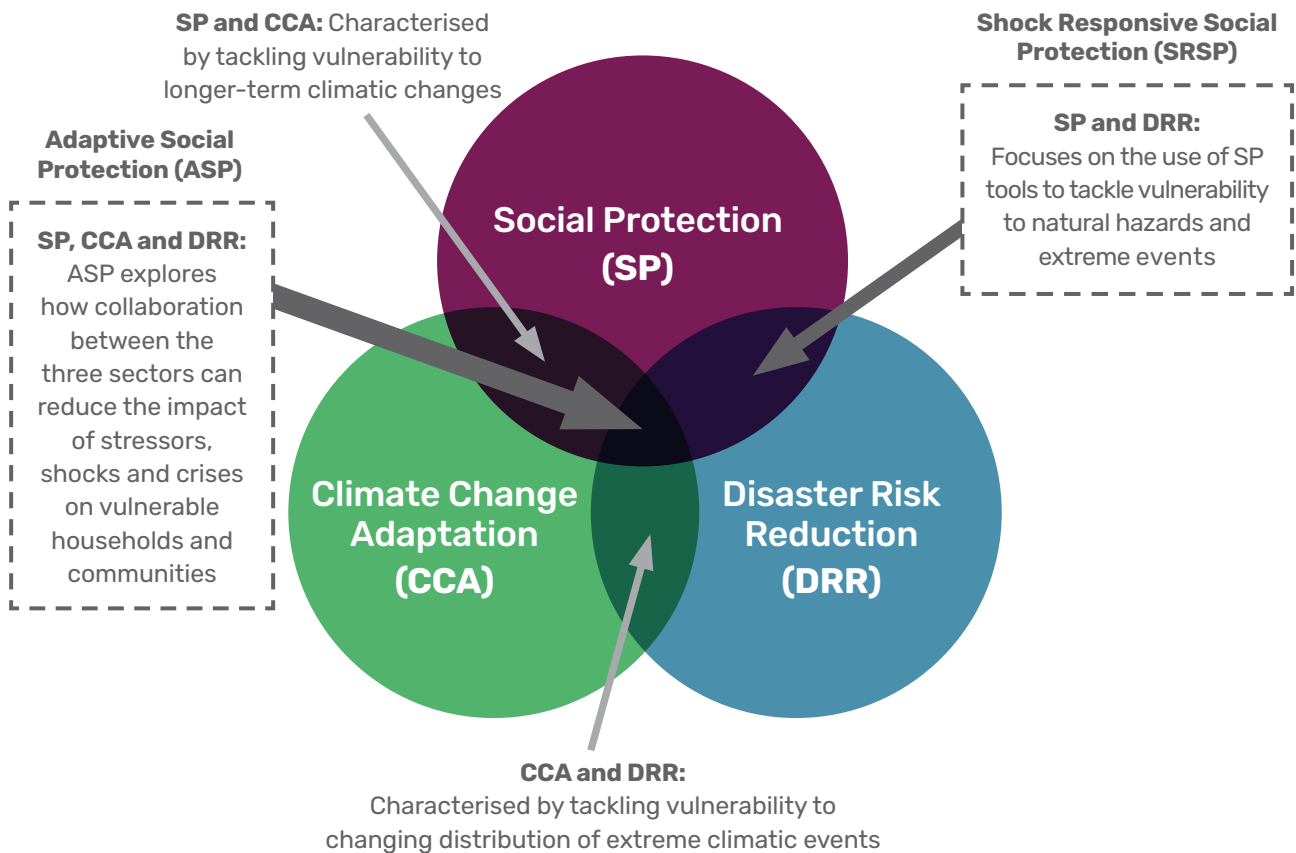
Other resources

-  [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

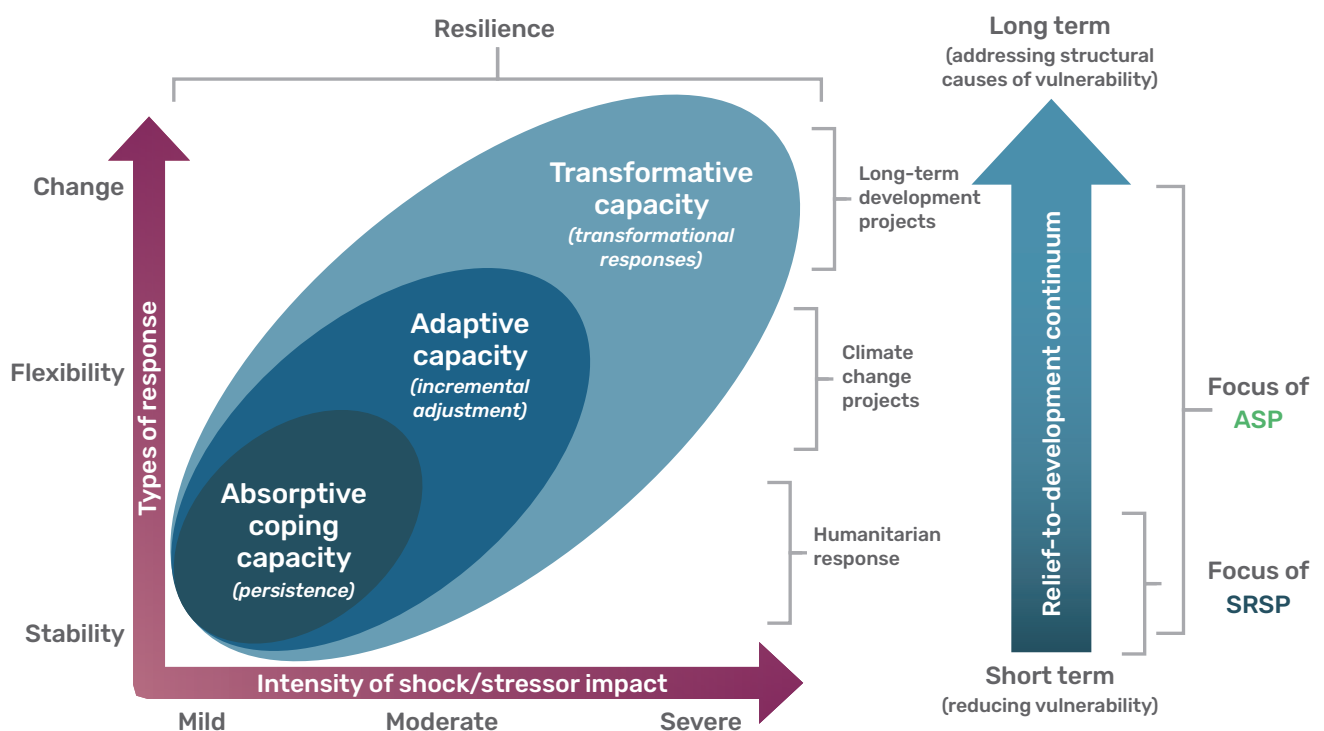
Social protection, climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) all share the same motivating principle of seeking to mitigate risks, reduce vulnerability and build resilience to livelihood shocks ([Vincent & Cull, 2012](#)). This overlap lends itself to integrated policies and programmes 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. Brasilia: 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.

④ Policy objectives and evidence of impacts

Social protection can have a wide range of objectives and impacts, from food security, access to services, gender equality, state-building, to social transformation. The emphasis for social protection programmes in developing countries has been on poverty and vulnerability reduction, and human development, for which there is good evidence. There is less evidence on longer-term developmental impacts such as sustainable exit or graduation from poverty, or better job prospects. The choice of objective depends on a range of factors.

Below are a selection of the objectives and impacts of social protection programmes.

4.1 Poverty, inequality and vulnerability

The primary aim for most social protection programmes is to reduce poverty and vulnerability. As detailed in [Section 1.3: Analytical concepts](#), different stakeholders have different conceptual approaches for how different social protection interventions achieve this.

There is strong evidence of the positive effects of social transfers (in particular, cash transfers) on poverty, and evidence of positive effects on inequality and vulnerability.

Poverty

In their 2016 evidence review, [Bastagli et al.](#) find a comparatively large evidence base linking cash transfers to reductions in monetary poverty. They looked at impacts on total expenditure, food expenditure and poverty measures. Most of the studies are from Latin America, followed by sub-Saharan Africa, then other regions. Of the 35 studies of cash transfer programmes reporting on the impact on household **total expenditure**, 26 demonstrate at least one significant impact and 25 an increase in total expenditure, ranging from a 2.8 to 33 percentage point change ([ibid.](#): 7, 87). Studies with insignificant findings point towards design and implementation features as explanations; for example, low level of transfer and delays in disbursement, as well as changes in household behaviour ([ibid.](#): 88). Of the 31 studies reporting impacts on **food expenditure**, they largely find an increase (23 studies reported a statistically significant increase in food expenditure). Two studies report a decrease in food expenditure 'due to a decrease in labour supply and possible prioritisation of savings over consumption' ([ibid.](#): 87). Nine studies

report on Foster–Greer–Thorbecke (FGT) **poverty indicators** (poverty headcount, poverty gap, squared poverty gap): only two-thirds found a statistically significant impact, but of those, all except one showed a reduction in poverty ([ibid.](#)). [Bastagli et al.](#) conclude that 'While cash transfers are shown to mostly increase total and food expenditure, it appears that in many cases this impact is not big enough to have a subsequent effect on aggregate poverty levels. However, with one exception, the studies consistently show decreases in poverty' ([ibid.](#): 7). Poverty headcount reductions range from four to nine percentage points, and from four (Mexico's PROGRESA) to eight (Zambia's Child Grant) percentage points for reductions in the poverty gap ([ibid.](#): 87).

A meta-analysis of safety net programmes (another term for social assistance interventions – see [Section 2: Types of social protection](#)) across Africa also finds significant increase in consumption among beneficiaries, with strong evidence that well-targeted programmes can be effective at reducing inequity and alleviating extreme poverty ([Ralston et al., 2017](#): 3). However, they also highlight that 'there is substantial heterogeneity in the impacts of different programs, suggesting that implementation and design factors, as well as local contexts, play important roles in determining the outcomes of programs' ([ibid.](#): 2).

Evidence from pilots of the BRAC graduation approach show improvements in 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 ([Banerjee et al., 2015](#)).

Inequality

Social protection, and social transfers in particular, is viewed as 'a tool in the fight against inequality, from both a material (income and consumption) and a non-material (such as access to services, social exclusion) perspective' ([Roelen et al., 2016](#): 231). Social protection investments can 'affect growth and inequality through a multiplicity of effects at micro, meso and macro level' ([ibid.](#): 10). Pathways include social protection programmes' impact on fiscal redistribution, promoting inclusive growth, building human capital, and reducing social exclusion ([ESCAP, 2015](#): 14). For more on economic growth see [Section 4.7](#), and for more on human capital and social exclusion see

[Section 4.2: Education](#); [Section 4.3: Health](#); [Section 4.4: Nutrition](#); [Section 4.5: Empowerment](#); and [Section 4.6: Social exclusion](#).

Evidence of the impact of social protection on **material inequality** in low- and middle-income countries is limited but growing (Roelen et al., 2016: 231). OECD (2019: 11) reports evidence of a 'strong pro-poor growth effect' of social assistance programmes, mostly due to better outcomes for children and youths in low-income households. Significant impacts on income inequality are reported from South Africa (through the combination of old-age pension, child support grant and disability grant) (Roelen et al., 2016); Asia (ESCAP, 2015), and Latin America (Ocampo & Gómez-Arteaga, 2016). For example, in Latin America, poverty and income inequality reduced in most countries in the region from 2003 to 2013 (against the trend of rising inequality globally), with innovative social protection programmes (including universal or broad-based pensions, health and child benefits, cash transfer programmes, and expanding contributory social security) a contributory factor (ibid.: 8). UNDP (2016: 19) reports that: 'a universal child allowance (*Asignación universal por hijo*) introduced in Argentina in 2009 is estimated to have reduced inequality by approximately 5 per cent' while the 'Brazilian Bolsa Familia Programme is estimate[d] to be responsible for 16 per cent of income inequality reduction in the country between 1999 and 2009'.

However, coverage and levels of spending on social protection interventions affect their impact on inequality. With typical direct transfers in low-income settings characterised by low benefits and coverage, the benefits can be too small to lift people out of poverty or substantially reduce income inequality, and indirect transfers (such as health and education provision) will have a greater redistributive effect (Ocampo & Gómez-Arteaga, 2016: 9, 15).

Looking at cash transfers in low- and middle-income countries from 2000 to 2015, Bastagli et al. (2016: 95) found seven studies reporting on the squared poverty gap – also known as poverty severity, a measure of the inequality among poor households. Of those, five had a significant result, of which four found a reduction in the squared poverty gap (ibid.: 88).

The impact of social protection on **non-material inequalities** is more complex. Roelen et al. (2016: 235) find that 'sensitively designed social protection interventions have some potential to help poor people overcome social exclusion and access barriers', with SDG 5 viewing social protection as a tool for achieving gender equality. For more on the evidence on how social protection can support improved gender equality, see [Section 5.2: Women and girls](#).

However, social protection alone cannot transform complex 'intersecting inequalities' affecting poor and marginalised people (ibid.).

Vulnerability

Social protection programmes also aim to reduce people's vulnerability to risks and shocks, preventing them from falling below a critical threshold of wellbeing by building resilience through building and protecting human and productive capital (UNDP, 2016: 19), increasing savings, and reducing the need to resort to negative coping strategies. Social assistance schemes can reduce vulnerability through impacts on education, health, nutrition, empowerment, social inclusion, asset accumulation, productive investment and employment (see evidence summarised in [Section 4.2: Education](#); [Section 4.3: Health](#); [Section 4.4: Nutrition](#); [Section 4.5: Empowerment](#); [Section 4.6: Social exclusion](#); [Section 4.7: Economic growth](#); and [Section 4.8: Employment](#)).

Looking at **child labour** – one negative coping strategy – Bastagli et al. (2016: 10) report that out of 19 studies looking at impacts of cash transfers on child labour force participation, eight found a statistically significant impact, all showing a decrease in child labour. More significant effects are found for reducing intensity (hours worked) than for prevalence (whether working/not working) (ibid.: 175). These significant results are from programmes in Latin America (plus one programme in Indonesia and one in Morocco). No cash transfer programme in sub-Saharan Africa finds a significant impact (ibid.). This finding is corroborated by Ralston et al.'s (2017: 3) meta-analysis of social assistance programmes in Africa, which found insignificant impacts of social assistance on negative coping strategies such as the use of child labour or temporary low wage work.

On **assets and savings**, Bastagli et al. (2016: 8) found that five of 10 studies found statistically significant increases in the share of households reporting savings (ranging from seven to 24 percentage points) or the amount of savings accumulated. Eight studies reported on households' accumulation of agricultural productive assets for crop production, three found 'a positive and significant impact' while five found no significant impact (ibid.). For possible causes of these findings, other evidence and a recommendation for further research on the impact of social protection on resilience, see [Section 4.7: Economic growth – micro level](#).

However, Ralston et al. (2017: 3) highlight the need for stronger evidence on social protection and **household resilience**. Their meta-analysis of social assistance programmes in Africa finds impacts on asset accumulation (particularly livestock ownership) and weakly significant impacts on monetary saving (ibid.).

Key texts

- > OECD. (2019). *Can social protection be an engine for inclusive growth?* (Development Centre Studies). Paris: OECD Publishing.

This report reviews the literature and identifies how social assistance (excluding public works programmes) and social insurance can affect growth and inequality through micro-, meso- and macro-level effects.

Focusing on ‘the micro determinants of inclusive growth’, it summarises the impact of different types of social protection programmes on the micro drivers of growth across different income groups. It presents evidence from 11 new impact evaluations of social protection programmes implemented in Brazil, Ghana, Germany and Indonesia.

- > Ralston, L., Andrews, C., & Hsiao, A. (2017). *The impacts of safety nets in Africa: What are we learning?* (Policy Research Working Paper 8255). Washington, DC: World Bank.

This meta-analysis reviews the results across 55 impact evaluation studies on key outcomes of safety net programmes in 14 different African countries. The study finds on average significant positive impacts on total and food consumption, and promising results on asset accumulation, such as livestock ownership.

- > 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.

This review examines the evidence on the effects of 56 cash transfer programmes on individuals and households: 55% were conditional cash transfers, mostly in Latin America; 25% unconditional cash transfers mostly in sub-Saharan Africa; 9% a combination of CCTs and UCTs; 7% social pensions; and 4% enterprise grants. It examines the evidence of (1) the impact of cash transfers on a range of individual- or household-level outcomes; (2) the links between variations in programme design and implementation features and cash transfer outcomes; and (3) the impacts of cash transfers, and of variations in their design and implementation components, on women and girls. The overall conclusion is that ‘the evidence reflects how powerful a policy instrument cash transfers can be, and highlights the range of potential benefits for beneficiaries’ (p. 12).

See also:

- > Roelen, K., Sabates-Wheeler, R., & Devereux, S. (2016). *Social protection, inequality and social justice*. In UNESCO, IDS, & International Social Science Council, *World social science report 2016. Challenging inequalities: Pathways to a just world*. UNESCO Publishing.

- > Hagen-Zanker, J., McCord, A., & Holmes, R. (2011). *Systematic review of the impact of employment guarantee schemes and cash transfers on the poor*. London: ODI.

4.2 Education

Many social transfers seek to improve children’s schooling, as an investment in human capital and to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty (Barrientos & Niño-Zarazúa, 2011). Impacts of social protection on schooling have included, at both primary and secondary levels, increased enrolment and attendance, better grade progression, and decreased drop-out (ibid.).

A 2013 systematic review by Baird et al. (cited by more recent reviews as ‘still the most thorough prior analysis’ on social assistance educational outcomes and conditionality (Ralston et al., 2017: 23)) finds that both conditional and unconditional cash transfers have positive effects on schooling **enrolment and attendance**. The effect sizes are larger for conditional transfers, but the difference is not significant (Baird et al., 2013). From their review of social assistance programmes in Africa, Ralston et al. (2017: 22) find a mean effect on enrolment of 7% relative to baseline (from 13 programmes) and a 6% improvement in attendance (from 15 programmes), although neither result is statistically significant.

They caution that many programmes in Africa do not achieve impacts on education as strong as conditional cash transfer programmes in Latin America, including Bolsa Família in Brazil and Prospera in Mexico (ibid.: 3). Zie’s systematic review of programmes for improving **school participation** and learning in low- and middle-income countries found that of all the different types of interventions, cash transfer programmes result in the largest and most consistent improvements in school participation (Snilstveit et al., 2015: iv). Social protection programmes that do not focus explicitly on schooling also have positive effects; for example, pensions are often used to pay grandchildren’s school fees (Barrientos & Niño-Zarazúa, 2011). However, empirical literature on the correlation between social insurance benefits (including pensions) and children and youth education outcomes is scarce, with mixed findings (OECD, 2019: 76).

Bastagli et al. (2016: 7) find that while the available evidence highlights a clear link between cash transfer receipt and increased school attendance, there is less evidence and a less clear-cut pattern of impact for longer-term **learning** (as measured by test scores) and cognitive development outcomes. A study on long-term effects of conditional cash transfers in Latin America also finds positive long-term effects on schooling but far less so on learning and cognitive skills (Molina Millán et al., 2019: 119). However, it is difficult to know whether

these findings are due to an actual lack of impact or because of the methodological challenges all long-term evaluations face (*ibid.*).

A 3ie systematic review found that **school feeding** is possibly one of the few interventions that shows promise for improving both school participation and learning (along with community-based monitoring) (*Snilstveit et al., 2015: v*). The effects were stronger in areas where there was high food insecurity and low participation in schools, while local ownership may improve outcomes (*ibid.*, 2015: 94–95). Effects were smaller in areas without malnutrition and where school participation rates are already high (*ibid.*: 443).

Key texts

- > *Snilstveit, B., Stevenson, J., Phillips, D., Vojtkova, M., Gallagher, E., Schmidt, T., Jobse, H., Geelen, M., Pastorello, M., & Evers, J. (2015). Interventions for improving learning outcomes and access to education in low- and middle- income countries: a systematic review (3ie Systematic Review 24). London: International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie).*

A 3ie systematic review looked at interventions for improving learning outcomes and access to education in low- and middle-income countries. The review synthesised evidence from 216 programmes reaching 16 million children across 52 low- and middle-income countries. Cash transfer programmes were found to ‘have the most substantial and consistent beneficial effects on school participation’ but do not ‘appear to lead to any improvement in learning outcomes’ (p. iv). Other promising interventions ‘for improving school participation outcomes include community-based monitoring, new schools and infrastructure and school feeding’ (*ibid.*). Structured pedagogy programmes have the largest and most consistent positive average effects on learning outcomes. A summary can be accessed [here](#).

- > *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.*
See summary in [Section 3.6: Conditionality – Key texts](#).
- > *Barrientos, A., & Niño-Zarazúa, M. (2011). Social transfers and chronic poverty: Objectives, design, reach and impact. Manchester: Chronic Poverty Research Centre.*
This report focuses on three policy questions: (1) do programme objectives address chronic poverty? (2) are programme design features – the identification

and selection of beneficiaries, delivery mechanisms and complementary interventions – effective in reaching chronically poor households? (3) do social assistance programmes benefit the chronically poor? The broad conclusions are that social protection does reach the chronically poor, and that there are significant improvements in poverty reduction. The report examines the types of programme and design features, which are shown to have more or less impact.

See also:

- > *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.*
- > *Ralston, L., Andrews, C., & Hsiao, A. (2017). The impacts of safety nets in Africa: What are we learning? (Policy Research Working Paper 8255). Washington, DC: World Bank.*
- > *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.*

4.3 Health

Social protection programmes can aim to improve health directly, for example by conditioning programmes on attendance at health services, or indirectly, for example through supplemented income and therefore consumption (*Barrientos & Niño-Zarazúa, 2011*).

Key social protection interventions that have health impacts are cash transfers and social health insurance. More evidence is available on cash transfers, particularly from conditional cash transfers (CCTs) in Latin America (and in particular Mexico’s PROGRESA/Oportunidades programme) (*Bastagli et al., 2016: 131*). CCTs are often conditioned on health investments (e.g. incentivising attendance for health education, measurements of height and weight, immunisations, and nutritional supplementation). Emerging evidence is also found from ‘cash plus’ programmes that provide linkages to health services.

There is strong evidence on the positive impacts of cash transfers (and some on health insurance programmes) on access to and use of health services, particularly in relation to children’s and maternal health. There is also evidence that cash transfers can be effective in tackling structural determinants of health outcomes such as financial poverty and intermediate determinants such as dietary diversity and sexual behaviours. Less evidence is available of impacts on health outcomes (in particular for objectively measured outcomes).

Access to and use of health services

Several reviews report strong evidence on the positive impacts of cash transfers on access to and use of health services.

A 2017 systematic review identified 51 studies of 22 **cash transfer and voucher programmes** and found 'that approaches tied to service use (either via payment conditionalities or vouchers for selected services) can increase use of antenatal care, use of a skilled attendant at birth, and in the case of vouchers, postnatal care too. The strongest evidence of positive effect was for conditional cash transfers and uptake of antenatal care, and for vouchers for maternity care services and birth with a skilled birth attendant' ([Hunter et al., 2017](#): 1). The CCT review by [Glassman et al. \(2012\)](#): abstract) finds that 'conditional cash transfers have increased antenatal visits, skilled attendance at birth, delivery at a health facility, and tetanus toxoid vaccination for mothers, and reduced the incidence of low birth weight'.

A 2016 rigorous review found that, on the whole, cash transfers – both conditional and unconditional – have increased use of health facilities ([Bastagli et al., 2016](#): 8). Of 15 studies reporting on the use of health facilities, nine reported 'statistically significant increases, ranging from an additional 0.28 preventative visits in Jamaica's PATH programme to an extra 2.3 general health visits in Tanzania's Social Action Fund' ([ibid.](#): 128).

Looking at **cash plus programmes**, free enrolment in health insurance for beneficiaries of the LEAP cash transfer programme in Ghana improved use of health services and reduced out-of-pocket health expenditures ([Handa et al., 2014](#)). Meanwhile qualitative evidence from [Owusu-Addo et al.'s \(2018](#): 691) review of cash transfers in sub-Saharan Africa indicated that 'while cash transfers play a critical role in removing the financial barriers associated with utilising health services, the money is not enough to meet all expenses associated with medical care'.

For **health insurance**, a 2013 systematic review finds 'relatively consistent evidence that health insurance is positively correlated with the use of maternal health services' ([Comfort et al., 2013](#): 81). A 2012 systematic review reports 'strong evidence that [community-based health insurance] improves resource mobilization for health and that both CBHI and SHI [social health insurance] improve health service utilization and provide financial protection for members in terms of reducing their out-of-pocket expenditure' ([Spaan et al., 2012](#): 689). However, [Acharya et al. \(2012](#): 8) found that while there was some evidence that health insurance schemes targeted at poorer households increased health-care utilisation in terms of outpatient visits

and hospitalisation, there was weak evidence to show that health insurance reduced out-of-pocket health expenses, in particular for the poorest.

Health outcomes – for example, morbidity, mortality

Systematic reviews highlight that there are few studies that look at the impact of cash transfers or health insurance on maternal and newborn health, and changes in health status ([Hunter et al., 2017](#); [Glassman et al., 2012](#): 690; [Comfort et al., 2013](#); [Acharya et al., 2012](#)).

A review of **cash transfers** in sub-Saharan Africa found moderate evidence that cash transfers impact on health and quality of life outcomes ([Owusu-Addo et al., 2018](#): 675). Of nine programmes focused on child health outcomes, seven reported significant effects ([ibid.](#): 689). Based largely on mothers' reports of health outcomes of their children, 'reduction in illness rates ranged from 4.9 [percentage points] in Zambia... to 17.02 [percentage points] in Lesotho...' ([ibid.](#): 690). In addition, three studies reported impacts on HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs): two had positive impacts on reducing prevalence or risk, and one found no significant difference between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries ([ibid.](#)). The review also reports that 'mental health indicators (happiness, hope, psychological distress and depression) were measured in six programs of which four programs showed significant improvements' ([ibid.](#)). The review identified that the size of the transfer and irregularity of transfer payment may hinder cash transfer effectiveness, and called for the provision of supplementary services and behaviour change interventions to optimise the impact of cash transfers on health and nutrition outcomes ([ibid.](#): 676). Having the supply capacity to meet health service demand is also critical ([Barrientos & Niño-Zarazúa, 2011](#)).

An older review of CCTs by [Lagarde et al. \(2009](#): 3), covering 10 papers reporting results from six studies, found three studies reported on higher order health outcomes. Findings were: 'Mixed effects on objectively measured health outcomes (anaemia) and positive effects on mothers' reports of children's health outcomes (22–25% decrease in the probability of children <3 years old being reported ill in the last month' ([ibid.](#)). [Lagarde et al. \(2009](#): 2) highlight that while in some cases programmes have noted improvements in health outcomes, 'it is unclear to which components these positive effects should be attributed'.

A systematic review of the evidence on the effects of **health insurance** in low- and middle-income countries found few studies focused on the quality of maternal health services or maternal and neonatal health outcomes ([Comfort et al., 2013](#): 81). The evidence

available on the quality and health outcomes was found to be 'inconclusive, given the differences in measurement, contradictory findings, and statistical limitations' (*ibid.*).

Structural and intermediate determinants of health outcomes

A 2018 systematic review of cash transfers in sub-Saharan Africa looked at 24 cash transfers comprising 11 unconditional, eight conditional and five combined unconditional and conditional cash transfers ([Owusu-Addo et al., 2018](#): 675). The review found 'cash transfers can be effective in tackling structural determinants of health such as financial poverty, education, household resilience, child labour, social capital and social cohesion, civic participation, and birth registration' (*ibid.*). The review further found 'cash transfers modify intermediate determinants such as dietary diversity, child deprivation, sexual risk behaviours, teen pregnancy and early marriage' (*ibid.*). Cash transfer effectiveness is influenced by 'intervention design features, macro-economic stability, household dynamics and community acceptance of programs' (*ibid.*)

For further evidence on dietary impacts, see [Section 4.4: Nutrition](#) and for further evidence on sexual behaviour and family planning impacts, see [Section 4.5: Empowerment](#).

Key texts


- > [Owusu-Addo, E., Renzaho, A. M., & Smith, B. J. \(2018\). *The impact of cash transfers on social determinants of health and health inequalities in sub-Saharan Africa: A systematic review. Health Policy and Planning, 33*\(5\), 675–696.](#)
A systematic review of the literature on cash transfers' impact on health and quality of life outcomes, and structural and intermediate determinants of health in sub-Saharan Africa covering the period 2000–2016 identified evidence from 53 studies covering 24 cash transfers. The review found that CTs can be effective in tackling structural and intermediate determinants of health, with moderate evidence on their impact on health and nutritional outcomes.
- > [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.](#)
See summary in [Section 4.1: Poverty, inequality and vulnerability – Key texts](#).
- > [Hunter, B. M., Harrison, S., Portela, A., & Bick, D. \(2017\). *The effects of cash transfers and vouchers on the use and quality of maternity care services: A systematic review. PLoS ONE 12*\(3\): e0173068.](#)

Consolidating and updating evidence from seven published systematic reviews on the effects of different types of cash transfers and vouchers on the use and quality of maternity care services, the authors conclude that 'effects appear to be shaped by a complex set of social and healthcare system barriers and facilitators. Studies have typically focused on an initial programme period, usually two or three years after initiation, and many lack a counterfactual comparison with supply-side investment' (p. 1).

See also:

- > [Comfort, A. B., Peterson, L. A., & Hatt, L. E. \(2013\). *Effect of health insurance on the use and provision of maternal health services and maternal and neonatal health outcomes: A systematic review. Journal of Health, Population and Nutrition, 31*\(4 Suppl. 2\), S81–S105.](#)
- > [Glassman, A., Duran, D., Fleisher, L., Singer, D., Sturke, R., Angeles, G., ... & Saldana, K. \(2013\). *Impact of conditional cash transfers on maternal and newborn health. Journal of Health, Population and Nutrition, 31*\(4 Suppl. 2\), S48–S66.](#)
- > [Spaan, E., Mathijssen, J., Tromp, N., McBain, F., Have, A. T., & Baltussen, R. \(2012\). *The impact of health insurance in Africa and Asia: A systematic review. Bulletin of the World Health Organization, 90*, 685–692.](#)
- > [Barrientos, A., & Niño-Zarazúa, M. \(2011\). *Social transfers and chronic poverty: Objectives, design, reach and impact.* Manchester: Chronic Poverty Research Centre.](#)
- > [Lagarde, M., Haines, A., & Palmer, N. \(2009\). *The impact of conditional cash transfers on health outcomes and use of health services in low and middle income countries. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2009*, 4\(CD008137\).](#)

Other resources

-  [Social protection for health: What are the health policy and systems research priorities? \(2018\). World Health Organization. \(1h:21\)](#)

4.4 Nutrition

Social protection has the potential to protect or improve nutritional status in a number of ways. Improved economic status can enable households to access more nutritious diets, health care, and education, and to make improvements in water, sanitation and hygiene. All of these can help people remain well-nourished and to grow and develop properly. However, the evidence for the impact of social protection on nutrition remains mixed.

While cash transfer programmes are found to play a positive role in increasing resources for food, health care and other care for children, evidence on whether cash transfers positively impact growth-related outcomes among children is mixed, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa ([de Groot et al., 2015](#): 2). Cash transfer pathways of impact tend not to be analysed, leaving it 'unclear why some cash transfer programmes have a significant impact on nutritional outcomes, while others do not' ([ibid.](#): 19).

A 2016 rigorous review of **cash transfer evidence** found that for **dietary diversity**, cash transfers consistently show increases ([Bastagli et al., 2016](#): 8). Of the 12 studies reporting on dietary diversity, seven showed a statistically significant improvement. However, the review found a lower proportion of significant results on **child stunting, wasting and underweight**. This more limited evidence on cash transfers improving children's nutritional status may be because nutrition is the outcome of a complicated process involving multiple factors in addition to a household's access to food ([Manley & Slavchevska, 2019](#): 205). [Bastagli et al. \(2016\)](#): 8) conclude that 'changes in design or implementation features, including complementary actions (e.g. nutritional supplements or behavioural change training), may be required to achieve greater and more consistent impacts on child anthropometric measures'. Results from a programme in Bangladesh show that the provision of cash plus behaviour change communication significantly improves nutrition outcomes compared to cash alone (Ahmed et al., 2016¹⁵).

There have been relatively few evaluations of the impact of **food transfers** on nutrition outcomes. Comparing cash and in-kind food transfers and vouchers in 10 developing countries, [Gentilini \(2016\)](#): 22) finds both modalities improve food consumption, income, dietary diversity, poverty and malnutrition compared with control groups. There is a fairly consistently reported – some stress 'mild' ([ibid.](#): 22) – tendency for cash transfers to be more effective than food in enhancing expenditure on/value of food consumed by the household and dietary diversity, while food leads to an increased household caloric intake ([ibid.](#); [McIntosh & Zeitlin, 2018](#): 3). However, [Gentilini \(2016\)](#): 22) cautions against generalising about overall comparative effectiveness of the modalities, as impacts vary according to context, specific objectives, and their measurement. The costs of in-kind food tend to be higher than for cash transfers and vouchers, but rigorous cost-effectiveness evidence is limited, and more standardised, robust efficiency analyses are needed ([ibid.](#)).

Reviews have shown that **school feeding** is not an effective way of improving nutrition outcomes, primarily because it fails to target children during the first 1,000 days of their development ([Alderman & Bundy, 2012](#)). This is widely viewed as the critical window of opportunity for preventing malnutrition. However, a recent study finds that school feeding can lead to small but significant gains in growth and can promote macronutrient and micronutrient adequacy ([Drake et al., 2018](#): 56–57). Schools might provide a useful platform for promoting nutrition messages and for reaching adolescent girls, although there is scant evidence on the impact of nutrition education ([Bhutta et al., 2013](#); [Drake et al., 2018](#): 58). The costs of school feeding vary significantly across countries, while estimating overall cost-effectiveness of school feeding is complicated by the multiple potential education and nutrition benefits of the intervention ([Drake et al., 2018](#): 60). While school feeding has been shown to have higher non-transfer costs than conditional cash transfers, further research is needed to ensure valid comparisons with other interventions ([ibid.](#): 60, 62).

Key texts

- > [Manley, J., & Slavchevska, V. \(2019\). Are cash transfers the answer for child nutrition in sub-Saharan Africa? A literature review. *Development Policy Review*, 37\(2\), 204–224.](#)
This literature review of 20 cash transfer schemes, including 12 from sub-Saharan Africa, finds cash transfer programmes 'have shown improvements in household diet and in some cases to agriculture, but have not always improved child health. However, a larger perspective focusing on two key time periods for nutrition – adolescence and the first 1000 days of life – reveals more opportunities for impact. In particular the opportunity to empower young women to get secondary education and cut adolescent pregnancy rates can improve the health of African children' (p. 204).
- > [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.](#)
See summary in [Section 4.1: Poverty, inequality and vulnerability – Key texts](#).
- > [Gentilini, U. \(2016\). The revival of the 'cash versus food' debate: New evidence for an old quandary? \(Policy Research Working Paper 7584\). Washington, DC: World Bank.](#)

¹⁵ No public link is available for this document: 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.

This paper reviews key issues and presents new evidence from randomised and quasi-experimental evaluations comparing cash and in-kind food transfers in 10 developing countries (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Mexico, Niger, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Yemen). Findings show that 'relative effectiveness cannot be generalized: although some differences emerge in terms of food consumption and dietary diversity, average impacts tend to depend on context, specific objectives, and their measurement. Costs for cash transfers and vouchers tend to be significantly lower relative to in-kind food. Yet the consistency and robustness of methods for efficiency analyses varies greatly' (abstract).


- > de Groot, R., Palermo, T., Handa, S., Peterman, A., & Ragno, L. P. (2015). *Cash transfers and child nutrition: What we know and what we need to know* (Innocenti Working Paper 2015-07). Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre. A 'comprehensive overview of the impacts of cash transfer programmes on the immediate and underlying determinants of child nutrition, including the most recent evidence from impact evaluations across Sub-Saharan Africa' (p. 2). Key gaps to address in future include 'cash transfer impacts on more proximate nutrition-related outcomes such as children's dietary diversity, as well as caregiver behaviours, intra-household violence, and stress, all of which have implications for child health and well-being' (p. 2).


See also:

- > Drake, L., Fernandes, M., Aurino, E., Kiamba, J., Giyose, B., Burbano, C., Alderman, H., Mai, L., Mitchell, A., & Gelli, A. (2018). *School feeding programs in middle childhood and adolescence*. In Bundy, D. A. P., de Silva, N., Horton, S., Jamison, D. T., & Patton, G. C., *Optimizing education outcomes: High-return investments in school health for increased participation and learning*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- > Bhutta, Z. A., Das, J. K., Rizvi, A., Gaffey, M. F., Walker, N., Horton, S., Webb, P., Lartey, A., Black, R. E., Lancet Nutrition Interventions Review Group, & Maternal and Child Nutrition Study Group. (2013). *Evidence-based interventions for improvement of maternal and child nutrition: What can be done and at what cost?* *The Lancet*, 382(9890), 452–477.
- > Ruel, M. T., & Alderman, H. (2013). *Nutrition-sensitive interventions and programmes: How can they help to accelerate progress in improving maternal and child nutrition?* *The Lancet*, 382(9891), 536–551.

- > *The Lancet*. (2013). *A four-paper series on maternal and child nutrition*.

Other resources

 ['Cash transfers for mother and baby health in Ghana'. Focuses on addressing persistent malnutrition and stunting among children in the first 1,000 days of life. \(2016\). UNICEF. \(4m:52\)](#)

 [Seminar series on nutrition and social protection. Five country presentations on how social protection programmes address nutrition behaviour change. \(2016\). Moderated by Secure Nutrition. \(2hr:3\)](#)

4.5 Empowerment

There is a major debate about whether and how social protection can empower poor, vulnerable, or socially excluded people, but the evidence base is slim and findings mixed. For example, a cross-country evaluation of graduation programmes' impact on empowerment found the effects to be mostly inconclusive ([Banerjee et al., 2015](#)). Meanwhile, a mixed methods evaluation of a graduation programme in two provinces in Burundi found community engagement increased, with participants indicating they felt a greater sense of respect and ability to participate as a result of the programme ([Devereux et al., 2015](#)).

Much of the literature on social protection and empowerment looks at cash transfers, and at the empowerment of women and girls ([Bastagli et al, 2016: 213](#)). Indicators of empowerment studied include abuse, decision-making power, and pregnancy, marriage, contraceptive use, and multiple sexual partners. The evidence base is small but growing.

From a review of 31 studies on the impact of cash transfers on empowerment (covering 13 countries and 19 cash transfer programmes), [Bastagli et al. \(2016: 212\)](#) report that cash transfers can reduce physical **abuse** of women by male partners (six out of eight studies had significant results, all showing a reduction). But for non-physical abuse (emotional abuse or controlling behaviour) of a woman by a male partner the results are mixed (of six studies with significant results, four indicated a decrease and two found an increase).

Other findings were programmes showing positive impacts on increasing women's **decision-making power** and some significant results on delaying **marriage** (with some mixed findings) ([ibid.](#)). [Bastagli et al. \(2016: 212\)](#) also report evidence of cash transfers reducing the likelihood of women having multiple **sexual partners** (but no evidence showing this for men), as well as mostly

resulting in increased **contraceptive use** (with one study reporting mixed findings for men only), and fairly strong evidence of a decreased likelihood of having children. **Khan et al. (2016)** report mixed findings from a systematic review of cash transfer programme impact on contraception – with a positive impact on contraceptive use in three studies, an increase in childbearing in two studies, and a decrease in fertility outcomes in four studies, but no impact on fertility in three other studies. **Khan et al. (2016: 371)** conclude the evidence is inconclusive because of ‘the limited number of studies, varying outcome measures and lack of intervention specifically for contraception’.

Evidence reviews conclude that while qualitative evidence tends to find positive impacts on empowerment (through improved decision-making, bargaining power and feelings of independence from partners), quantitative results are more mixed (**Buller et al., 2018: 27–28**, summarising **van den Bold et al., 2013** and **Bonilla et al., 2017**). Other studies have also raised concerns that conditional cash transfers can ‘reinforce traditional gender norms, or place additional burdens on women’s time use, further reinforcing gender inequities’ (**Buller et al., 2018: 28**; see **Molyneux, 2008** and **Cookson, 2018**).


Supply-side factors can limit social protection empowerment outcomes. Cash transfers may be more effective when combined with parallel/complementary initiatives that mitigate, for example, barriers to contraceptive uptake, or barriers to educational outcomes such as low school quality and accessibility constraints (**Bastagli et al., 2016: 228**). Other research notes that social protection should connect up to infrastructure and public service initiatives, or risk stalling progress on women’s empowerment (**Chopra & Ugalde, 2018**).


For more on social protection and women and girls, see [Section 5.2: Women and girls](#).

Key texts

- > Buller, A. M., Peterman, A., Ranganathan, M., Bleile, A., Hidrobo, M., & Heise, L. (2018). *A mixed-method review of cash transfers and intimate partner violence in low- and middle-income countries* (Innocenti Working Paper 2018-02). Florence: UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti. See [summary in Section 5.2: Women and girls – Key texts](#).
 - > 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.
 - See summary in [Section 4.1: Poverty, inequality and vulnerability – Key texts](#).
 - > Khan, M. E., Hazra, A., Kant, A., & Ali, M. (2016). *Conditional and unconditional cash transfers to improve use of contraception in low- and middle-income countries: A systematic review*. *Studies in Family Planning*, 47(4), 371–383. This review searched scientific and grey literature databases from 1994 to 2016 and includes 11 papers from 10 studies. Key findings include: ‘Cash transfers were used for increasing school attendance or improving health and nutrition, but not directly for contraception.... All studies treated contraceptive use or fertility only as unintended and indirect outcomes’ (p. 371).
 - > Molyneux, M. (2008). *Conditional cash transfers: A pathway to women’s empowerment?* (Pathways of Women’s Empowerment Working Paper 5). Brighton: IDS. Are conditional cash transfers really providing long-term empowerment to women? This review of conditional cash transfers, particularly of PROGRESA in Mexico, argues that although these programmes are widely replicated due to their perceived positive impact in reducing poverty, they reinforce asymmetric gender roles. PROGRESA aims to empower women, and women involved in the programmes report that, in general, they experience greater self-esteem, wellbeing and autonomy. However, the programme’s gender bias reinforces the position of women as mothers, tying them more closely to the home.
- See also:
- > Chopra, D., with Ugalde, A. (2018). *Initiating women’s empowerment; achieving gender equality: Interlinkages amongst social protection, infrastructure and public services*. Background paper for UN Women Expert Group Meeting Sixty-third Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63), 13–15 September 2018, New York.
 - > Combaz, E., & Mcloughlin, C. (2014). *Voice, Empowerment and Accountability: Topic Guide*. Birmingham: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.
 - > Devereux, S., Roelen, K., Sabates, R., Stoelinga, D., & Dyevre, A. (2015). *Final evaluation report: Concern’s Graduation Model Programme in Burundi*. IDS, Centre for Social Protection, Laterite, & Concern Worldwide.
 - > Devereux, S., McGregor, J. A., & Sabates-Wheeler, R. (Eds.). (2011). ‘Social protection for social justice’. *IDS Bulletin* 42(6). Brighton: IDS.

Other resources

 [Social protection and the empowerment of rural women in Africa. \(2016\).](#) FAO & International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG). (1hr:38)

 [#HEARMET00: UNICEF research on gender-based violence for #16Days of Activism. \(2018\).](#) Peterman, A., & Palermo, T., *The Transfer Project*. UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti. (28m:38)

4.6 Social exclusion

Social protection from an equity perspective – as promoted in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – has the potential to address simultaneously many drivers of exclusion and deprivation (UNDP, 2016: 9). Several studies have set out the theoretical causal pathways and possible outcomes (Babajanian & Hagen-Zanker, 2012; UNICEF, 2012). Social protection can reduce social exclusion by providing greater income security and reducing poverty, resilience to falling into (or further into) poverty, greater independence, and more active engagement in the labour market, as well as strengthening the social contract between citizens and government (Kidd, 2017: 212). The impact of social protection on social inclusion can be assessed both by the impact on wellbeing outcomes, and by the impact on the structural drivers of social exclusion and deprivation ('at the individual level, such as vulnerabilities related to the life course, or at the societal and group level, such as discriminatory norms and practices' (Babajanian & Hagen-Zanker, 2012: 4)). Social protection interventions can further social inclusion either through 'instruments that directly aim to reduce discrimination' and inequities (maternity and paternity leave, anti-discrimination employment policies) or by mainstreaming inclusion in social protection design 'sensitive to specific vulnerabilities of and impacts on children and their families' (UNICEF, 2012: 83–84).

Social protection has moved away from a narrow focus on income poverty, to attempting to promote broader positive changes (Molyneux et al., 2016: 15). There are 'some positive, if as yet inconclusive and mixed results' (ibid.). There are some studies that suggest social protection programmes have some **impact on inclusion**, including increasing participation in social networks and strengthening traditional informal social protection (ibid.; Bastagli et al., 2016). Some studies also point to an improvement in beneficiaries' social status (UNDP, 2016: 20); others that social protection interventions can reduce shame, 'either directly through promoting self-affirmation or indirectly

through poverty reduction or countering stigma' (Roelen, 2017: 15).

However, there is still little evidence to suggest that social protection has been able to address **structural causes** of poverty and inequality and therefore be truly transformative. Constraints include the weak articulation between social protection programme activities and wider political and policy spheres, and the limits of citizen activity 'without robust regulatory mechanisms to enable representation and transparency' (Molyneux et al., 2015: 16).

The **design and implementation** of social protection modalities can exacerbate social exclusion. For example, women, young people and migrants who are overrepresented in non-standard employment – both in traditional sectors (e.g. agriculture, construction) and increasingly in emerging sectors (e.g. the digital economy) – are likely to be excluded from social insurance and labour market programmes that tend to only benefit those in formal employment (Behrendt & Nguyen, 2018: 1). Exclusion can also occur for multiple and complex reasons at various stages of a social protection programme, including when beneficiaries are identified and registered, when transfers are paid, and when conditions are enforced (Kidd, 2017: 212). The causes of exclusion could be 'because of decisions on coverage and budgets, challenges caused by scheme design and implementation, and differing capabilities of people to access schemes and overcome barriers to inclusion' (ibid.: 213). Moreover, social protection interventions can also 'induce and reinforce shame', by using shame explicitly 'to target policies or promote desirable behaviour' or by implicitly reinforcing shame through 'disrespectful engagement and derogatory treatment' (Roelen, 2017: 15).

Effective public **communications campaigns and grievance mechanisms** assist people to appeal their exclusion. Grievance mechanisms can also help to promote active citizenship and promote social accountability (Sabates-Wheeler et al., 2017). However, experiences with grievance mechanisms are mixed. Interventions with higher coverage of beneficiaries exclude less; when governments invest less in coverage 'the more they need to invest in administration if they wish to reduce exclusion' (Kidd, 2017: 237).

Key texts

> Kidd, S. (2017). [Social exclusion and access to social protection schemes. *Journal of Development Effectiveness*, 9\(2\), 212–244.](#)

This article examines the barriers that people in developing countries face when attempting to access

social protection schemes, with examples of how these have been addressed. The findings are that eligible people are excluded for multiple, complex reasons, including coverage and budget decisions, scheme design and implementation challenges, and people’s differing capabilities to access schemes.

- > **Roelen, K. (2017). *Shame, poverty and social protection* (IDS Working Paper 489). Brighton: IDS.** This paper provides a conceptual framework for understanding the interactions between shame, poverty and policy, and explores the interactions between these with a focus on social protection and welfare policy. It provides next steps for the consideration of shame in development, including the need for clarity of language, to move beyond the ‘shamee’ and ‘shamer’ dichotomy, and to explore policy options.
- > **Babajanian, B., Hagen-Zanker, J., & Holmes, R. (2014). *How do social protection and labour programmes contribute to social inclusion? Evidence from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Nepal*. London: ODI.** This paper draws on the findings from four country case studies: life skills education and livelihoods training for young women in Afghanistan; asset transfers in the Char river islands and a food transfer programme in Bangladesh; a health insurance programme in India; and the Child Grant cash transfer in Nepal. All interventions contributed to wellbeing outcomes, to varying degrees, and to strengthening social relations, including social participation and social networks. However, ‘the findings also show that, on many occasions, the interventions have not delivered transformative changes in the lives and livelihoods of excluded households and individuals’ (p. iv).

See also:

- > **Khan, S., Combaz, E., & McAslan Fraser, E. (2015). *Social exclusion: Topic guide*. Revised edition. Birmingham: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.**
- > **Molyneux, M., Jones, W. N., & Samuels, F. (2016). *Can cash transfer programmes have ‘transformative’ effects?*. *Journal of Development Studies*, 52(8), 1087–1098.**
- > **Combaz, E. (2013). *Social inclusion in productive safety net programmes* (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report 1005). Birmingham: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.**
- > **Babajanian, B., & Hagen-Zanker, J. (2012). *Social protection and social exclusion: An analytical framework to assess the links* (Background Note). London: ODI.**

4.7 Economic growth

Social protection contributes to inclusive economic growth in direct and indirect ways, at different levels (see Table 4). Of particular importance and where the evidence is strongest are individual- and household-level growth impacts as this promotes inclusive growth (**Mathers & Slater, 2014: 3**). There is some evidence of local economic effects, and while macro growth impacts are also beneficial, **Mathers and Slater (2014: 3)** caution that ‘decisions about social protection spending should primarily be made by assessing its impacts on poverty and vulnerability’.

The following sections look at various micro-meso-macro effects, except for employment impacts, which are presented in **Section 4.8**.

Table 4. Social protection and economic growth framework

	Direct impacts on growth	Indirect impacts on growth
Micro (individual or household) level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent loss of productive capital (+) • Accumulate productive assets (+) • Increase motivation and risk-taking in livelihoods of poor households (+) • Impacts on labour force participation (+/-) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase investment in human capital (+)
Meso (community or local regional) level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiplier effects from increased local consumption and production (+) • Accumulation of productive community assets (+) • Labour market impacts including inflation effects on local wages (+/-) 	n/a
Macro (national) level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cumulative increases in household productivity (+) • Stimulate aggregate demand (+) • Changes in aggregate labour force participation (+/-) • Increase capital markets through pension funds (+) • Effects of taxation on savings/investment (-) • Effects of government borrowing and inflation (-) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate economic reforms (+) • Enhance social cohesion and reduce inequality (+) • Enhance human capital (+) • Impacts on fertility rates (+/-)

Source: **Mathers and Slater (2014: 8)**, Department of Foreign Affairs, **CC BY 3.0 AU** licence.

Microeconomic growth (individual or household level)

As shown in Table 4, social protection can have individual and household impacts in five main ways (direct and indirect): preventing the loss of productive capital; accumulating productive assets; increasing innovation and risk taking in the livelihoods of poor households; increasing investment in human capital; and influencing labour force participation ([Mathers & Slater, 2014](#): 10). For impacts on the labour force see [Section 4.8: Employment](#).

There is evidence of the positive impact of cash transfers on strategic **livelihood choices, including increasing savings and livestock accumulation** ([Bastagli et al., 2016](#); [Daidone et al., 2017](#): iv), but some findings are mixed. [Bastagli et al. \(2016\)](#) found that of 10 studies that looked at the effect of cash transfers on household savings, half found statistically significant increases in the share of households reporting savings (ranging from seven to 24 percentage points) or the amount of savings accumulated. Of eight studies reporting on household accumulation of agricultural productive assets for crop production, three found 'a positive and significant impact' while five found no significant impact ([ibid.](#)). Explanations include 'behaviour influenced by strong programme labelling (money was to be spent for children) and the low value or unpredictability of the transfer' ([ibid.](#)). There was some evidence that 'female-headed households make greater productive investments than male-headed households' ([Hagan-Zanker et al., 2017](#): 1).

Other reviews of cash transfers in Africa have highlighted 'promising results' on **asset accumulation** (particularly livestock ownership) ([Ralston et al., 2017](#): 3; [Daidone et al., 2017](#)). [Ralston et al. \(2017\)](#): 3) also find an average increase in earnings of 50% and an average increase in business ownership of 70%, interpreting from this finding that beneficiaries may use accumulated assets to improve their labour productivity and earnings. Other qualitative research from six African countries finds that 'a small but predictable flow of cash improves strategic livelihood choices and stimulates productive investments, including through positive effects on beneficiary entry into risk-sharing arrangements and networks for economic collaboration' ([Banks et al., 2017](#): 299).

[OECD \(2019\)](#): 56–57) finds that scholarships for poor students and social pension also have positive effects on household food consumption and investments.

[Ralston et al. \(2017\)](#): 3) call for stronger evidence on **resilience mechanisms**, finding weakly significant impacts on monetary saving and insignificant impacts on **negative coping strategies** (the use of child labour

or temporary low wage work). (For more on findings on child labour, see [Section 4.1: Poverty, inequality and vulnerability](#)). Explanations include insufficient transfer size to eliminate negative coping behaviours, challenges in identifying results on these outcomes, and implementation factors such as payment irregularity ([ibid.](#)). Irregular payments can have a profoundly negative impact on both welfare and livelihoods, with ample evidence that late payments can worsen household economic security and prompt recourse to negative risk-coping mechanisms ([Banks et al., 2017](#): 316).

Social protection can also contribute to economic growth by helping to increase **human capital** – through improving access to health care and education, improving food security and dietary diversity, and increasing income, thereby potentially increasing livelihood opportunities in the short term, and enhancing households' productivity in the long term ([UNDP, 2016](#): 19; [Slater et al., 2014](#)). For further information, see [Section 4.2: Education](#); [Section 4.3: Health](#); [Section 4.4: Nutrition](#); and [Section 4.5: Empowerment](#).

Local (or meso) economic growth (community level)

The theory is that social protection can help stimulate local economies through multiplier effects from increased local consumption and production, creation of productive community assets (most commonly through public works programmes), and improvement of local labour markets, through effects on supply, demand and cost of labour (e.g. by public works programmes increasing the demand for labour) ([Mathers & Slater, 2014](#); [Slater et al., 2014](#); [FAO, 2017](#)).

There is some evidence of **multiplier effects** ([Mathers & Slater, 2014](#): 3). [Thome et al. \(2016\)](#): 2) find evidence of 'significant spillovers, resulting in [cash transfer] income multipliers' from seven unconditional cash transfers in sub-Saharan Africa. Applying a local economy-wide impact evaluation model, analysis identified nominal income multipliers ranging from 2.52 in Ethiopia ('for every Birr transferred by the programme... up to 2.52 Birr in income can be generated for the local economy') to 1.34 in Kenya (summarised in [FAO, 2017](#): 4). The extent of cash transfer multiplier effects depend on whether the transfers are cash or in-kind and can be limited by the often very small size of transfers in many low-income countries (and in particular typical for public works programmes 'where wages are often deliberately set low to facilitate self-targeting of only the poorest and for fear of inflation effects on local wages') ([Mathers & Slaters, 2014](#): 14).

There appears to be little evidence of cash transfers leading to **local price inflation** (with FAO and UNICEF including this as one of their **myth-busters**), although

the [Bastagli et al. \(2016: 29\)](#) review finds that it is a possible unintended effect, 'likely to be stronger where there are market constraints to respond to increased local demand'.

The evidence 'is less clear on the local economic impact of [community] assets' created by public works programmes ([Mathers & Slater, 2014: 3](#)).

Macroeconomic growth (national level)

The primary aims of social protection are to reduce poverty and vulnerability rather than to promote macro-level growth. There is limited evidence of the effects of transfers both in creating overall economic growth and in addressing inequality through redistributing resources ([Alderman & Yemtsov, 2014; OECD, 2019](#)).

While there are some macroeconomic studies that 'show positive impacts in certain circumstances and how active social spending (programs with a productivity enhancing objective) more likely leads to increases in **aggregate growth**', [Mathers and Slater \(2014: 19](#), emphasis added) highlight that 'these studies do not provide certainty about the channels through which growth impacts occur and caution should be exercised in extrapolating findings to other contexts'.

From a cross-country regression analysis comparing **inequality** before and after taxes and transfers, [Ostry et al. \(2014: 7\)](#) find that 'the combined direct and indirect effects of redistribution – including the growth effects of the resulting lower inequality – are, on average, pro-growth'. However, 'the impact of social protection on aggregate economic growth in low-income contexts is likely insignificant', possibly due to the relatively low level of social protection spending as well as the marginal share of national income held by poor people ([Mathers & Slater, 2014: 16](#)); 'the low levels of both taxes and social spending limit the redistributive impact of fiscal policy in developing economies' ([IMF, 2014: 18](#)). Moreover, redistributive fiscal policies need to be carefully designed to minimise efficiency costs in terms of effects on incentives to work and save (e.g. gradually phasing out cash transfer benefits as incomes rise) ([ibid.: 22](#)). See [Section 4.1: Poverty, inequality and vulnerability](#) for more on social protection's impact on inequality.

However, the overall economic impact of social protection investments remains insufficiently documented ([OECD, 2019: 3](#)).

Key texts

> [OECD. \(2019\). *Can social protection be an engine for inclusive growth?* \(Development Centre Studies\). Paris: OECD Publishing.](#)

> [Daidone, S., Davis, B., Handa, S., & Winters, P. \(2017\). *The household and individual-level economic impacts of cash transfer programmes in sub-Saharan Africa*. Rome: FAO.](#)

Results from seven rigorous impact evaluations of government-run unconditional social cash transfer programmes in sub-Saharan Africa (Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe) show significant positive impacts on the livelihoods of beneficiary households. Most countries saw 'a reduction in household participation in casual agricultural wage labour... an increased use of agricultural inputs... increases or changes in agricultural production... increased livestock accumulation... [and avoidance of] negative risk coping strategies... [and strengthened] informal social protection systems' (p. iv).

> [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.](#)

See summary in [Section 4.1: Poverty, inequality and vulnerability – Key texts](#).

> [Alderman, H., & Yemtsov, R. \(2014\). *How can safety nets contribute to economic growth? The World Bank Economic Review*, 28\(1\), 1–20.](#)

How do social safety nets contribute to growth? This article offers four pathways: (i) enabling households to make better investments in their future and changing incentives for investment in human capital; (ii) managing risk; (iii) creating assets and household-level investments; and (iv) relaxing political constraints on policy. Growth alone is not a justification for implementing safety nets; this argument is secondary to poverty reduction and equity.

> [Mathers, N., & Slater, R. \(2014\). *Social protection and growth: Research synthesis*. Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade \(Australia\).](#)

This review identifies the ways in which social protection impacts on growth and productivity, assessing available evidence against a framework for the links between social protection and economic growth at household, local and national levels. Looking mainly at social assistance, but also social insurance and active labour market policies, the report concludes that 'social protection is an important tool for promoting inclusive growth' with 'potential to contribute, if only marginally, to aggregate growth' (p. 25).

See also:

> [FAO. \(2017\). *The economic case for the expansion of social protection programmes*. Rome: FAO.](#)

- > Fisher, E., Attah, R., Barca, V., O'Brien, C., Brook, S., Holland, J., ... & Pozarny, P. (2017). The livelihood impacts of cash transfers in sub-Saharan Africa: Beneficiary perspectives from six countries. *World Development*, 99, 299–319.
- > From protection to production, FAO website. Compilation of studies on the impact of cash transfer programmes on household economic decision-making and the local economy.
- > Thome, K., Taylor, J. E., Filipski, M., Davis, B., & Handa, S. (2016). The local economy impacts of social cash transfers: A comparative analysis of seven sub-Saharan countries. Rome: FAO.
- > Kabeer, N., Piza, C., & Taylor, L. (2012). What are the economic impacts of conditional cash transfer programmes? A systematic review of the evidence. Technical report. London: EPPI-Centre, University of London.

Other resources

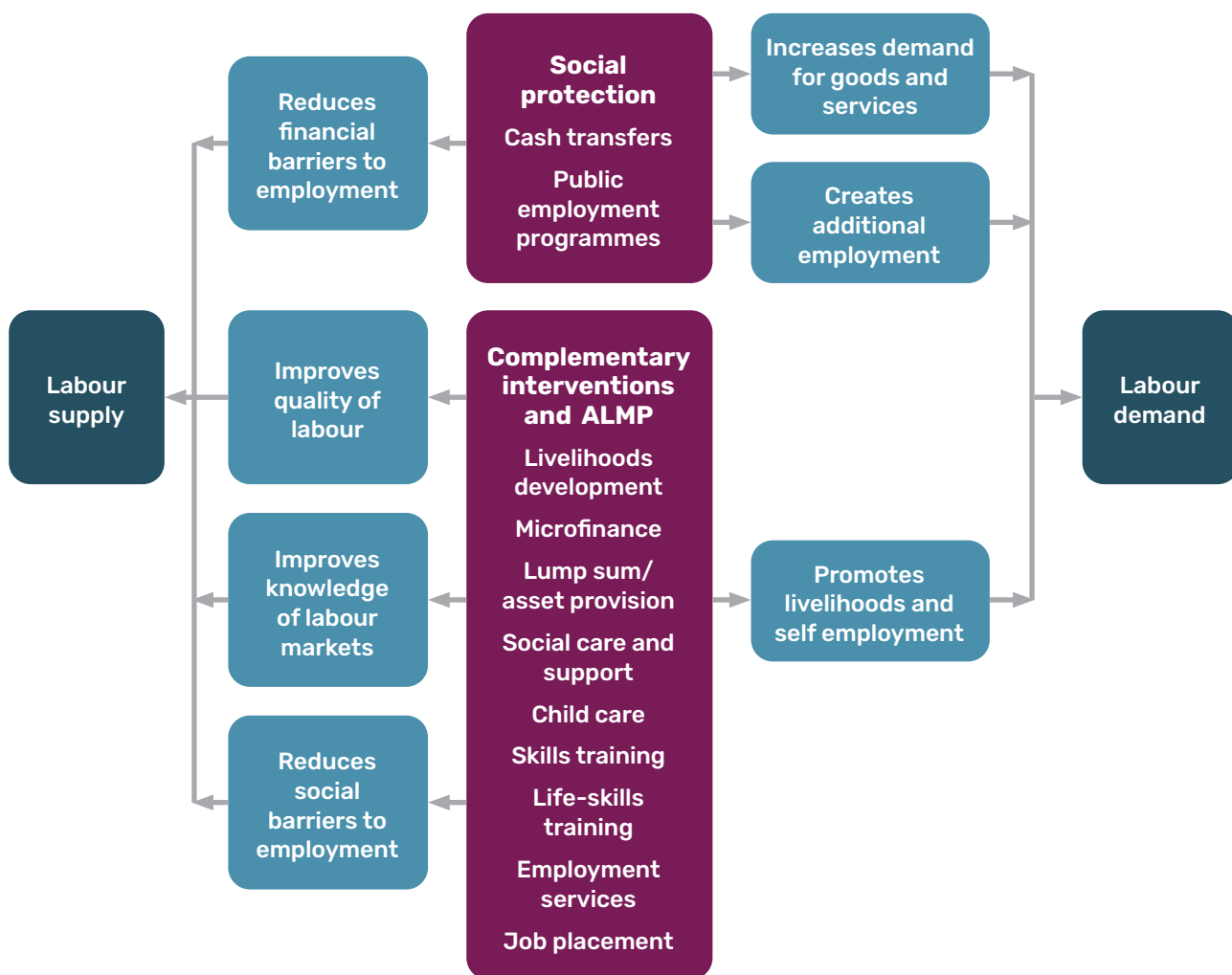
 Cash transfers: Myths versus reality. (2017). FAO. (2m:27)

4.8 Employment

Social protection impacts on employment through various channels. Figure 6. provides a summary of supply- and demand-side labour effects.

Several reviews highlight there is no evidence of **cash and food transfers** creating disincentives to work (OECD, 2019; Ralston et al., 2017: 25; Mathers & Slater, 2014: 12). However, in terms of effects on labour, OECD (2019: 50) concludes that '[m]odest transfers tend not to be strongly associated with changes in labour supply in either participation or intensity (hours worked). Evidence for the most studied social assistance programmes, conditional and unconditional cash transfers, is mixed'. For example, Bastagli et al. (2016: 9)

Figure 6. Social protection impacts on labour demand and supply



Note: Public employment programmes (PEPs) are 'programmes creating state sponsored employment which is not market based (known as Public Works Programmes, Workfare, Welfare to Work, Cash for Work, Employment of Last Resort, Employment Guarantee programmes, etc.)' (McCord, 2018: 10).

Source: McCord (2018: 21), CC BY 3.0 AU licence.

report: 'For just over half of studies reporting on adult work, the cash transfer does not have a statistically significant impact on adult work. Among those studies reporting a significant effect among adults of working age, the majority find an increase in work participation and intensity. In the cases where a reduction in work participation or work intensity is reported, these reflect a reduction in participation among the elderly, those caring for dependents [*sic.*] or are linked to reductions in casual work.'

Looking at the long-term effects for children and young adults in Latin America who benefited from conditional cash transfers in early childhood or during school years, a study by [Molina Millán et al. \(2019: 119\)](#) found mixed employment and earnings impacts, 'possibly because former beneficiaries were often still too young'.

At the meso level, there is evidence of cash transfers leading to positive impacts on labour markets, through boosting trading activities and local businesses ([Bastagli et al., 2016: 29](#)). [OECD \(2019: 52–53\)](#) also finds that conditional cash transfers 'tend to have positive or no effects on investments in small businesses', but that they 'do not seem to impact investments in formal businesses'. The extent of cash transfer multiplier effects depends on whether the transfers are cash or in-kind and can be limited by the often very small size of transfers in many low-income countries (and in particular typical for PWP) ([Mathers & Slaters, 2014: 14](#)).

Looking at other types of interventions, there is no evidence that **public works programmes** generate medium- to long-term sustainable extra employment, or on what the impacts are from skills developed 'through training or on-the-job practice' ([GIZ, 2019: 6, 8](#)).

Graduation programmes complement transfers with access to savings and credit, and training and tailored coaching. Long-term evidence on the impacts of graduation programmes is still scarce, including on their labour effects, but is slowly emerging as more longitudinal data becomes available. 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](#)).

Turning to **active labour market policies**, [McKenzie \(2017: abstract\)](#) cautions that many evaluations find 'no significant impacts' on employment or earning. This includes vocational training, wage subsidies, job search assistance, and assistance moving for jobs. [McKenzie](#) identifies that urban labour markets 'appear to work reasonably well in many cases' and therefore there is 'less of a role' for these kinds of interventions ([ibid.](#)).


Instead, there is more of a need to help firms overcome obstacles in creating more jobs (e.g. training on labour laws and provision of legal support), and to help workers access different labour markets by moving into different sectors and accessing jobs in new locations ([ibid.](#): 17–18). For **labour market regulation**, there is limited research and from the evidence available, effects are small and mixed. [Betcherman \(2014: 124\)](#) looks at minimum wages and employment protection legislation (EPL) and finds that '[e]fficiency effects are found sometimes, but not always, and the effects can be in either direction and are usually modest... youth, women and the less skilled are disproportionately outside the coverage [of this legislation] and its benefits'. [Bhorat et al. \(2017: 47\)](#) find limited research on the employment effect of minimum wages in sub-Saharan Africa, but overall find from Ghana, Kenya, Malawi and South Africa that 'introducing and raising the minimum wage has a small negative impact or no measurable negative impact'. However, there is significant variation in findings and evidence of employment losses in some countries, in part due to 'the great variation in the detail of the minimum wage regimes and schedules country by country, but also by the variations in compliance' ([ibid.](#): 48).

Key texts

See [Section 4.7: Economic growth – Key texts](#) and additional references:

- > [McKenzie, D. \(2017\). *How effective are active labor market policies in developing countries? A critical review of recent evidence. The World Bank Research Observer, 32\(2\), 127–154.*](#)
- > [Betcherman, G. \(2014\). *Labor market regulations: What do we know about their impacts in developing countries?. The World Bank Research Observer, 30\(1\), 124–153.*](#)
- > [McCord, A. \(2012\). *Skills development as part of social protection programmes. Background paper prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2012. London: ODI.*](#)

Other resources

 [Integrating the graduation approach with government social protection and employment generation. \(2018\). Social Protection for Employment Community. \(1h:19\)](#)

⑤ Vulnerable groups: Specific needs and challenges

5.1 Children

Children are more vulnerable to malnutrition, disease and abuse than adults, and are overrepresented among the poor (UNICEF & World Bank, 2016). Three elements of child vulnerability are: (1) biological and physical needs; (2) strategic needs (children's limited levels of autonomy and dependence on adults); and (3) institutional invisibility and lack of voice in policy agendas (Roelen & Sabates-Wheeler, 2012). There is a window of opportunity for investing in children, with diminishing rates of return the older they get (UNICEF, 2012).

The purpose of social protection targeted at children is to help meet their basic needs, build their human capital, overcome barriers to access services, and strengthen families' capacity to care for children (UNICEF, 2019a). Social protection supports caregivers, who may be parents, grandparents or other guardians, to meet children's needs and to support children's access to health, education and care services. The Joint Statement on Advancing Child-Sensitive Social Protection (DFID et al., 2009) outlines the appropriate design, implementation and evaluation of child-sensitive social protection programmes.

The vast majority of children still have no effective social protection **coverage**, with only 35% of children globally receiving social protection benefits (ILO-UNICEF, 2019: 2). There is great regional variation: 87% of children in Europe and Central Asia and 66% in the Americas receive benefits, but only 28% of children in Asia and the Pacific and 16% in Africa do so (ibid.). A positive trend is the expansion of cash transfers for children, with countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mongolia moving to universal coverage (ibid.).

Social protection has **wide-ranging impacts** for children (ibid.: 12). Evidence shows social assistance programmes (cash transfers, public works programmes and food transfers/vouchers) can improve household economic security, including increased food security, with direct impact on child poverty (UNICEF-ESARO/Transfer Project, 2015; Bastagli et al., 2016).

Impacts of cash transfers on nutrition outcomes such as stunting are less clear (de Groot et al., 2015) (see Section 4.4: Nutrition). In child and maternal health, social protection can reduce cost-related barriers to services, including transport costs, user fees and costs

of medicines, but three reviews of cash transfers found no measurable impacts on fertility, or maternal or infant mortality (ILO-UNICEF, 2019). The UNICEF-ESARO/Transfer Project (2015: 25) highlights the impact of UCTs on HIV outcomes, particularly HIV prevention among adolescents, drawing on emerging evidence from the South Africa Child Support Grant and the Kenya Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children. Impacts include reducing risky behaviour and sexual exploitation and delaying sexual debut (ibid.).

Meanwhile, there is significant evidence that cash transfers in various countries have had positive impacts on school enrolment and attendance, while fewer studies have addressed learning outcomes, perhaps due to the complex dynamics behind them (UNICEF-ESARO/Transfer Project, 2015; Bastagli et al., 2016) (see Section 4.2: Education). Long-term evidence on the impact of conditional cash transfers in Latin America finds that programmes help children to achieve better grades and enable completion of higher levels of schooling (Molina Millán et al., 2019: 141). The relationship between poverty, cash transfers and child protection issues is also complex, and under-researched (ILO-UNICEF, 2019). Three possible channels through which social transfers can influence child protection outcomes are: 'direct effects observed where the objectives of social transfers are explicit child protection outcomes; indirect effects where the impact of social transfers on poverty and exclusion leads to improved child protection outcomes; and potential synergies in implementation of social transfers and child protection' (Barrientos et al., 2013: 4).

ILO-UNICEF's 2019 summary reminds us that while social protection and cash transfer programmes in particular offer opportunities for addressing child poverty, 'expanding cash transfer programmes must not come at the expense of good-quality services, which are essential for families to use transfers to support the success of their children' (ibid.: 12).

Key texts

- > ILO-UNICEF. (2019). *Towards universal social protection for children: Achieving SDG 1.3*. ILO-UNICEF Joint Report on Social Protection for Children. New York & Geneva: UNICEF and International Labour Office.

This joint report reflects recent developments in social protection for children living in poverty and expands on child poverty information by providing data on monetary and multidimensional child poverty. Building on Chapter 2 of the World Social Protection Report (ILO, 2017) and research from UNICEF, this update has a specific focus on recent developments related to universal child grants (UCGs).

> **UNICEF–ESARO/Transfer Project. (2015). *Social cash transfer and children's outcomes: A review of evidence from Africa*. New York: UNICEF.**

This study summarises the evidence of the impact of social cash transfers in Africa. It concludes that these transfers 'have demonstrated an impact on a wide range of outcomes for children... in terms of human capital... as well as on economic development and on community and social dynamics' (pp. vi–vii). It identifies operational lessons, noting that the range of results across countries is affected by: (i) size of transfer; (ii) predictability of payments; (iii) profile of beneficiaries; (iv) conditionality; and (v) national ownership.

> **Roelen, K., & Sabates-Wheeler, R. (2012). *A child-sensitive approach to social protection: Serving practical and strategic needs*. *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice*, 20(3), 291–306.**

Child-sensitive social protection (CSSP) has gained considerable momentum, particularly in a developing country context. CSSP requires a critical perspective and for context to guide its design and delivery. Claims about what makes social protection child-sensitive are often based on (widely agreed) assumptions rather than sound evidence about what works for children in a particular situation. There are no universal truths about how to design and deliver child-sensitive social protection. CSSP need not be a separate form of social protection; all types of interventions have the potential to carry a degree of child-sensitivity, although no current set of interventions can be considered child-sensitive across the board.

> **Sanfilippo, M., Martorano, B., & De Neubourg, C. (2012). *The impact of social protection on children: A review of the literature* (Working Paper 2012-06). Florence: UNICEF Office of Research.**

Reviewing evidence on the impact of social protection programmes in the developing world, this paper assesses which channels can maximise the benefits of social protection for the different dimensions of children's wellbeing. The analysis concludes that cash transfers can have a substantial impact on reducing the monetary poverty of children as well as compensating for the foregone income from child labour.

See also:

- > **Machado, A., Belo, C., Soares, F., & Osorio, R. (2018). *Overview of non-contributory social protection programmes in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region through a child and equity lens*. Brasília & Amman: International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth and UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office.**
- > **Peterman, A., Neijhoft, A., Cook, S., & Palermo, T. (2017). *Understanding the linkages between social safety nets and childhood violence: A review of the evidence from low- and middle-income countries*. *Health Policy and Planning*, 32(7), 1049–1071.**
- > **Pozarny, P. (2016). *Impacts of social protection programmes on children* (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report 1381). Birmingham: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.**
- > **Barrientos, A., Byrne, J., Villa, J. M., & Pena, P. (2013). *Social transfers and child protection* (Working Paper 2013-05). Florence: UNICEF Office of Research.**

5.2 Women and girls

Women often need social protection as they are disproportionately vulnerable due to lack of capital, high wage differentials and gendered work norms, bearing the responsibility for childcare, and exclusion from basic services. Women's poverty increases during reproductive years when they have children and take up socially assigned care and domestic responsibilities (World Bank, 2018a: 6).

However, women tend to be excluded from social protection. To meet their domestic responsibilities, women either stop work or work part time in insecure, lower paid, informal, and often 'invisible', sectors (Ulrichs, 2016). This limits their access to contributory social protection (as they are less able to pay into these schemes and/or meet conditions such as salary, working hours and years), leaving them with access (at best) to less adequate non-contributory schemes such as social assistance. The ILO (2017: xxxi) reports that globally 'only 41.1 per cent of mothers with newborns receive a maternity benefit, while 83 million new mothers remain uncovered'. This masks large regional differences; for example, only 15.8% of mothers with newborns receive a maternity benefit in Africa (ibid.: 27).

There is growing policy commitment to ensuring social protection has a positive impact on gender equality. This is reflected in growing attention to a wider range of outcomes beyond immediate programme objectives related to poverty, food security and human development,

including intra-household gender dynamics and, more recently, women's experience of intimate partner violence ([Buller et al., 2018](#): 3). In 2018, the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) discussed social protection for the first time, with the priority theme of *Social protection systems, public services and sustainable infrastructure for the empowerment of women and girls*. The **negotiated outcome** includes progressive language on social protection.

The evidence shows that social protection can support improved gender equality. Programmes have positively impacted women and children's health, girls' education, and women's knowledge levels and empowerment within the household and community. Outcomes include reduced violence against women including reduced intimate partner violence, employment and livelihoods impacts and productive inclusion, as well as positive impacts on child marriage and safe adolescent transitions (increased age of sexual debut, reduced number of sexual partners, HIV infections, etc.).

The global review of cash transfers from 2000 to 2015 found that interventions have a particularly positive impact on **education and employment** of women and girls ([Hagen-Zanker et al., 2017](#), summarising findings from [Bastagli et al., 2016](#)). In general, women and girls benefit more from transfers than men and boys ([ibid.](#)). The review highlighted that a 'small evidence base suggests that the impacts of cash transfers are not necessarily determined by the sex of the main recipient' ([ibid.](#)).

On empowerment, the review found that cash transfers can increase **women's decision-making power and choices**, including those on marriage and fertility, and **reduce physical abuse** by male partners ([Bastagli et al., 2016](#)). Three potential pathways for cash transfers' impact on intimate partner violence are on economic security and emotional wellbeing, intra-household conflict, and women's empowerment. A recent review found that while the economic security and wellbeing pathway decreases intimate partner violence, the other two pathways have 'ambiguous effects depending on program design features and behavioural responses to program components' ([Buller et al., 2018](#): 2). The study concludes that 'program framing and complementary activities, including those with the ability to shift intra-household power relations[,] are likely to be important design features to maximize the impact of cash transfers for reducing IPV [intimate partner violence], and mitigating potential adverse impacts' ([ibid.](#)). For more on social protection and women's empowerment, see [Section 4.5: Empowerment](#).

Other research has highlighted **mixed findings and some questions over the sustainability of impacts** of cash transfers on various indicators of gender equality.

[Baird et al. \(2016\)](#), using experimental control groups, assessed the relative effects of CCT and UCT programmes targeted to adolescents for two years. They found two years after the programme 'significant declines in HIV prevalence, teen pregnancy, and early marriage' among unconditional cash transfer beneficiaries 'evaporated quickly' ([ibid.](#)). However, 'children born to unconditional cash transfer beneficiaries during the program had significantly higher height-for-age z-scores at follow-up' ([ibid.](#)). Looking at the effects of the conditional cash transfer programme, they found that conditional transfers offered to out-of-school girls 'produced a large increase in educational attainment and a sustained reduction in the total number of births', but 'no gains in health, labour market outcomes, or empowerment' ([ibid.](#)).

Turning to **crisis contexts**, women are disproportionately affected by crisis and often play a role in filling gaps in service delivery during crisis. However, there is limited evidence on cash transfers and gender outcomes in crisis contexts, an under-researched area. A review of the evidence cites emerging mixed findings of cash relieving household tensions in humanitarian contexts and improving women's decision-making while also risking additional burdens being imposed on women and reinforcing gender stereotypes ([Simon, 2018](#)).

Research highlights that conditional cash transfers relying on female recipients tend to reinforce and draw on 'traditional' values which assume **women's role as primary caregivers** in families. This only empowers women as mothers and carers, not as individuals ([Molyneux, 2008](#)). Beneficiary women cannot always increase their control over household income, while conditions and other changes may increase their domestic workload and time burden ([Holmes & Jones, 2010](#)). [Hagen-Zanker et al. \(2017: 2, 5\)](#) found cash transfers sometimes increased how long women spent on domestic work, alongside younger girls spending less time as they attended school more regularly. Critical feminist analysis is sceptical of the capacity of conditional cash transfers to transform the root causes of women's poverty and subordinate social status, while qualitative research among women conditional cash transfer recipients in Uruguay, Nicaragua, Mexico and Peru studies have shown how programmes generate an undue burden on women's time ([Cookson, 2018: 5, 8](#)). Also discussed in [Section 4.5: Empowerment](#).

Key texts

- > [Buller, A. M., Peterman, A., Ranganathan, M., Bleile, A., Hidrobo, M., & Heise, L. \(2018\). *A mixed-method review of cash transfers and intimate partner violence in low and middle-income countries* \(Innocenti Working Papers 2018-02\). Florence: UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti.](#)

This mixed methods review of studies in low- and middle-income countries explores the causal link between cash transfers and intimate partner violence. It proposes three pathways through which cash transfers could impact intimate partner violence: (1) economic security and emotional wellbeing, (2) intra-household conflict, and (3) women's empowerment.

- > Hagen-Zanker, J., Pellerano, L., Bastagli, F., Harman, L., Barca, V., Schmidt, T., & Laing, C. (2017). *The impact of cash transfers on women and girls: A summary of the evidence*. London: ODI.

This paper summarises the findings on impacts on women and girls from the Bastagli et al. (2016) cash transfer review (see summary in [Section 4.1: Poverty, inequality and vulnerability – Key texts](#)).

- > World Bank Independent Evaluation Group. (2014). *Social safety nets and gender learning from impact evaluations and World Bank projects*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

A systematic review of evidence on social safety nets and gender from impact evaluations and World Bank Group's projects. It analyses the evidence on increasing women's bargaining power and decision-making, improving education outcomes of boys and girls, and promoting maternal and child health.

- > Holmes, R., & Jones, N. (2010). *Rethinking social protection using a gender lens* (Working Paper 320). London: ODI.

To what extent is social protection programming reinforcing women's traditional roles and responsibilities, or helping to transform gender relations in economic and social spheres? This paper synthesises multi-country research, finding that the integration of gender into social protection approaches has so far been uneven at best. Broader policy commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment is not often reflected in social protection objectives. Overall, a comprehensive approach to tackling gender-specific vulnerabilities has been limited. However, all the programmes studied had both intended and unintended effects on women and gender relations. Attention to dynamics within the household can help to maximise positive programme impacts and reduce potentially negative ones.

See also:

- > Chopra, D., with Ugalde, A. (2018). *Initiating women's empowerment; achieving gender equality: Interlinkages amongst social protection, infrastructure and public services*. Background paper for UN Women Expert Group Meeting Sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63), 13–15 September 2018, New York.

- > Cookson, T. P. (2018). *Unjust conditions: Women's work and the hidden cost of cash transfer programs*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- > Iyahan, I. (2018). *Making social protection gender-responsive. Lessons from UN Women's work in the Eastern Caribbean*. New York: UN Women.
- > Baird, S., McIntosh, C., & Özler, B. (2016). *When the money runs out: Do cash transfers have sustained effects on human capital accumulation?* (Policy Research Working Paper 7901). Washington, DC: World Bank.
- > Ulrichs, M. (2016). *Informality, women and social protection: Identifying barriers to provide effective coverage* (Working Paper 43). London: ODI.

Other resources



[Online community – Gender-sensitive social protection on socialprotection.org](#). Chaired by International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG) and FAO. Webinars and other resources available to members.



[Social protection and gender equality webinar series funded by UKAid and convened by ODI, organised around the sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women \(CSW63\), New York, March 2019.](#)

- [Realising rights: How can gender social protection advance gender equality?](#) On the different approaches to advancing gender equality with a focus on women in the labour market and social protection for unpaid care work. (1hr:01:10)
- [The politics of gender-responsive social protection](#). (1hr:16:25)
- [Financing gender responsive social protection](#). (1hr:21:55)

5.3 Older people

Challenges faced by older people include: lack of access to regular income, work and health care; declining physical and mental capacities; and dependency within the household (Sepulveda, 2010). Without income or work, older people tend to depend on others for their survival. They also usually have greater need for health-care services and for domestic help. Women are likely to live longer than men, but becoming a widow may increase vulnerabilities if they have no land rights, assets, or mobility to seek employment (*ibid.*).

Many older people in lower-income countries do not have access to social protection. Older people's

interaction with social protection is usually in the form of an old-age pension, a type of cash transfer. Contributory pensions are limited as they rely on formal employment, and coverage rates are low in low- and middle-income countries (Holzmann et al., 2009). This also has a gender dimension as fewer women than men are in the formal sector (ibid.). However, 'significant progress has been made in extending pension system coverage', with 'a noticeable trend in developing countries... [of] the proliferation of non-contributory pensions, including universal social pensions' (ILO, 2017: 75). 'Today almost all Latin American countries have [social pensions], 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, 2018: 73). Social pensions therefore address a gap for poor people, particularly women, and are politically popular (ADB, 2012). Older people, usually women, may also care for grandchildren, and may receive child benefits for them. There is a strong trend for this household role in sub-Saharan Africa, with less evidence from other regions.

Key texts

- > International Labour Office Social Protection Department (2018). *Social protection for older persons: Policy trends and statistics 2017–19* (Social Protection Policy Paper 17). Geneva: ILO. This policy paper analyses global trends and recent policies on pensions for older people. It looks at how pension coverage has been extended in many low- and middle-income countries, through a mix of contributory and non-contributory schemes.
- > Sepulveda, M. (2010). *The question of human rights and extreme poverty*. Report of the independent expert to the United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council, Fourteenth Session on 31 March 2010. This UN report examines whether social pensions help realise the right to social security and an adequate standard of living. It highlights that large numbers of people work outside formal employment and traditional informal support systems for older people are changing under the pressure of increased longevity, widespread poverty, HIV/AIDS and migration. The report recommends that states recognise social pensions as critical elements for the progressive realisation of the right to social security for older people.
- > Holzmann, R., Robalino, D., & Takayama, N. (2009). *The role of social pensions and other retirement income transfers: Closing the coverage gap*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

This book has four specific objectives: (a) to discuss the role of retirement income transfers in the context of a strategy for expanding old-age income security and preventing poverty among the elderly; (b) to take stock of international experience with design and implementation; (c) to identify key policy issues that need to receive attention during the design and implementation phases; and (d) to offer some preliminary policy recommendations and propose next steps.

See also:

- > HelpAge International. (2017). *Cash transfers and older people's access to healthcare: A multi-country study in Ethiopia, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zimbabwe*. London: HelpAge International.
- > HelpAge International. (2016). *Work, family and social protection: Old age income security in Bangladesh, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam*. Chiang Mai: HelpAge International, East Asia/Pacific Regional Office.
- > Azra, C. (2015). *The gender dimensions of pension systems: Policies and constraints for the protection of older women* (Discussion Paper 1). New York: UN Women.
- > ADB. (2012). *Social protection for older persons: Social pensions in Asia*. Manila: Asian Development Bank.

Other resources

-  'Social protection for older people in Africa'. A series of linked videos. (2010). HelpAge International.
 - [Social protection for older people in Africa – overview](#). (4m:07)
 - [Case study from Mauritius, where a universal, non-contributory pension has been implemented since 1958](#). (9m:56)
 - [Case study from Namibia, where a universal pension has been implemented for the last 20 years](#). (8m:13)

5.4 People with disabilities

People with disabilities comprise 15% of the world's population, with the majority living in low- and middle-income countries (ILO, IDA et al., 2019: 1). Social protection plays a critical role for people with disabilities, as they 'face barriers to accessing employment, education, health care and disability-related services, and to earning enough income to cover both ordinary and disability-related costs, severely restricting their escape from poverty' (ibid.: 4). What type of support

is needed depends on ‘the type and severity of impairment, environment, age, gender, ethnicity, poverty and other grounds for discrimination’ (*ibid.*: 4). Disability intersects with other inequalities, meaning women with a disability and older people with a disability (for example) may need special consideration.

Disability is rising up the social protection agenda. However, while social protection frameworks (such as the social protection floors) recognise the needs and rights of people with disabilities to social protection, beyond identifying people with disabilities as a vulnerable group, there has been a lack of comprehensive strategies for their inclusion (*Banks et al., 2017*: 225). In 2019, the ILO, the International Disability Alliance (IDA) and others released the **Joint Statement Towards Inclusive Social Protection Systems Supporting the Full and Effective Participation of Persons with Disabilities** to guide and support future action to ensure that social protection systems take into account the rights of persons with disabilities and support their full and effective participation.

Kidd et al. (2019): iii) identify four relevant **categories of social protection programmes** for people with disabilities: ‘disability-specific schemes, for which only persons with disabilities are eligible; disability-relevant schemes, which are largely accessed by persons with disabilities (old age and veterans’ pensions); targeted mainstream schemes, for which “capacity to work” is a key criterion; and, mainstream schemes for which persons with disabilities are usually eligible on an equal basis to others’.

Social protection **coverage** of persons with and without disabilities is known to be low in most low- and middle-income countries, although limited data disaggregation means there is little accurate data on coverage of people with disabilities by mainstream social protection programmes. There is some evidence that coverage varies by type and severity of functional limitation, although this varies by country, with, for example, coverage slightly lower for those with the most profound functional limitations in South Africa (*Kidd et al., 2019*: iv). Failing to address barriers to inclusion (such as inaccessibility of administration and service procedures and centres, communication barriers, discriminatory attitudes of administrators, limited awareness of eligibility for programmes, targeting errors, among others) can lead to exclusion for people with disabilities (*Banks et al., 2017*: 225; *Devandas Aguilar, 2017*: 56). Barriers arise at policy, design and implementation levels (*Kidd et al., 2019*).

There is **limited evidence on the impact** of social protection schemes on persons with disabilities in low- and middle-income countries. A small number of

disability-specific benefits have been evaluated (*Kidd et al., 2019*: v). These report some impact on consumption, education, health, livelihoods and psychosocial wellbeing.

Meanwhile, few mainstream social protection programmes adjust their poverty threshold for inclusion to account for the **extra costs of disability**, which can substantially deplete a household’s income and lower standards of living (*Banks et al., 2017*: 234; *Devandas Aguilar, 2017*). Similarly, country studies by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine highlight that the low value of transfers that do not cover disability-related costs, which are insufficient for achieving a minimum standard of living, let alone the development of stronger livelihoods (Vietnam study – *Banks et al., 2018b*), as well as the poor alignment of benefit content with the needs of people with disabilities (e.g. not covering disability-specific health-care services and devices) (among other issues) (Nepal study – *Banks et al., 2018a*).

Growing evidence shows that **conditionality** attached to CCTs can exclude people with disabilities owing to structural barriers (e.g. the lack of accessible information that impedes deaf people from participating in training or meetings with social services) (*Devandas Aguilar, 2017*: 58). While some CCT programmes have exempted people with disabilities from these conditionalities, supporting people with disabilities in meeting conditionalities can be an opportunity to invest in human capabilities to promote social inclusion and active participation (*ibid.*). This requires ‘an intersectoral intervention... to guarantee access to the required services by persons with disabilities and their families’ (*ibid.*)

To avoid ‘benefit traps’, income security and disability-specific assistance should be designed as separate but complementary interventions to get the right balance between labour inclusion and providing an adequate level of income security for people with disabilities (*ibid.*: 56).

Key texts

- > *Kidd, S., Wapling, L., Schjoedt, R., Gelders, B., Bailey-Athias, D., Tran, A., & Salomon, H. (2019). Leaving no-one behind: Building inclusive social protection systems for persons with disabilities (Working Paper). Orpington: Development Pathways.*

How can social protection systems and schemes be more inclusive of persons with disabilities? This paper answers the question through a review of relevant literature, an analysis of household survey datasets and seven low- and middle-income country case studies: Brazil, India, Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda, South Africa and Zambia.

- > Banks, L. M., Mearkle, R., Mactaggart, I., Walsham, M., Kuper, H., & Blanchet, K. (2017). Disability and social protection programmes in low- and middle-income countries: A systematic review. *Oxford Development Studies*, 45(3), 223–239.

This systematic review finds that in low- and middle-income countries people with disabilities’ ‘access to social protection appears to fall far below need’, with benefits ‘mostly limited to maintaining minimum living standards’ (p. 223). The review highlights the need for high-quality, robust evidence on this topic, in particular broader assessments of social protection outcomes, research that unpacks ‘disability’ by gender, age and impairment types, and comparative research of access to social protection between beneficiaries with and without disabilities.

- > Devandas Aguilar, C. (2017). Social protection and persons with disabilities. *International Social Security Review*, 70(4), 45–65.

This article by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities sets out the potential of well-designed social protection programmes to directly improve persons with disabilities’ enjoyment of their rights, including by promoting active citizenship, social inclusion and community participation. However, many national social protection systems have embedded traditional charity and medical approaches, thereby ‘deepening the dependence, segregation and institutionalization of persons with disabilities’ (p. 46).


See also:


- > Banks, L. M., Walsham, M., Neupane, S., Neupane, S., Pradhananga, Y., Maharjan, M., ... & Kuper, H. (2018a). Disability-inclusive social protection

research in Nepal: A national overview with a case study from Tanahun district (International Centre for Evidence in Disability Research Report). London.

- > Banks, L. M., Walsham, M., Van Minh, H., Duy Kien, V., Quynh Mai, V., Thu Ngan, T., Bich Phuong, B., Ha Son, D., Bao Ngoc, N., Thi Thuy Duong, D., Blanchet, K., & Kuper, H. (2018b). Disability-inclusive social protection in Vietnam: A national overview with a case study from Cam Le district (International Centre for Evidence in Disability Research Report). London.
- > DFAT. (2014). Disability and social protection: Technical guidance note – 2014. Canberra: Department of Foreign Aid and Trade (Australia).
- > Rohwerder, B. (2014). Disability inclusion in social protection (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report 1069). Birmingham: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.
- > Development Pathways: The Disability Benefit Database.

Other resources

 Adapting the graduation approach for people with disabilities. (2017). Recorded by CGAP with Fonkoze, Trickle Up, & Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund. (1hr:31:11)

 Why is social protection vital to ensure that no person with a disability is left behind? (2018). Development Pathways. (1h:32)

6 Design and implementation guidance

This section provides links to key manuals, guidance and other practical resources.

6.1 General guidance and manuals

- > Barrett, S., & Kidd, S. (2015). *The design and management of cash transfer programmes: An overview*. Frankfurt am Main: KfW Development Bank.
- > EC. (2015). *Supporting social protection systems* (Tools and Methods Series, Concept Paper 4). Brussels: European Commission.
- > ILO. (2015). *Social protection assessment-based national dialogue: A global guide. Joint United Nations response to implement social protection floors and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals*. Geneva: ILO.
- > Inter Agency Social Protection Assessments (ISPA) Core Diagnostic Instrument (CODI).
- > OECD. (2018). *Social protection system review: A toolkit*. OECD development policy tools. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- > Robalino, D. A., Rawlings, L., & Walker, I. (2012). *Building social protection and labor systems: Concepts and operational implications*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- > Samson, M., van Niekerk, I., & MacQuene, K. (2011). *Designing and implementing social transfer programmes: A policy manual*. Cape Town: Economic Policy Research Institute.
- > UNDG. (2015). *UNDG coordination toolkit*. United Nations Development Group & ILO.
- > Andrews, C., Bassett, L. K., Castaneda, T., Grosh, M. E., Loureiro, J. P., Quintana, R., & Steta Gandara, M. C. (2012). *Safety nets how to: A toolkit for practitioners (English)*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

6.2 Financing

- > Bastagli, F. (2015). *Bringing taxation into social protection analysis and planning* (Guidance note). London: ODI.
- > [ILO social protection floors cost calculator](#).

6.3 Value for money

- > Cherrier, C., Gassmann, F., Mideros Mora, A., & Mohnen, P. (2013). *Making the investment case for social protection: Methodological challenges with lessons learnt from a recent study in Cambodia* (Working Paper 2013-06). Florence: UNICEF Office of Research.
- > [ILO social protection floors cost calculator](#).
- > White, P., Hodges, A., & Greenslade, M. (2013). *Guidance on measuring and maximising value for money in social transfer programmes – second edition*. London: DFID.
- > White, P., Hodges, A., & Greenslade, M. (2015). *Measuring and maximising value for money in social protection systems. Companion guidance to measuring and maximising value for money in social transfer programmes*. London: DFID.

6.4 Targeting

- > Slater, R., & Farrington, J. (2009). *Making social transfers appropriate, achievable and acceptable: A practical tool for good targeting*. London: ODI.

6.5 Conditionality

- > Fiszbein, A., & Schady, N. (2009). CCTs: Policy and Design Options. In Fiszbein, A., & Schady, N. *Conditional cash transfers: Reducing present and future poverty* (World Bank Policy Research Report, pp. 165–203). Washington, DC: World Bank.
- > Ibararán, P., Medellín, N., Regalia, F., & Stampini, M. (Eds.). (2017). *How conditional cash transfers work: Good practices after 20 years of implementation*. Inter-American Development Bank.

6.6 Payment

- > Barca, V., Hurrell, A., MacAuslan, I., Visram, A., & Willis, J. (2013). *Paying attention to detail: How to transfer cash in cash transfers. Enterprise Development and Microfinance, 24(1), 10–27*.
- > del Ninno, C., Subbarao, K., Kjellgren, A., & Quintana, R. (2013). *Improving payment mechanisms in cash-based safety net programs* (Social Protection & Labor Discussion Paper 1305). Washington, DC: World Bank.

- > Inter Agency Social Protection Assessments (ISPA) Payment Tool.

6.7 Accountability

- > Ayliffe, T., Aslam, G., & Schjødt, R. (2018). *Social accountability in the delivery of social protection* (Technical Guidance Note). Orpington: Development Pathways.
- > Van Stolk, C., & Tesliuc, E. T. (2010). *Toolkit on tackling error, fraud and corruption in social protection programs* (SP Discussion Paper 1002). Washington, DC: World Bank.

6.8 Administrative systems

- > Barca, V. (2017). *Integrating data and information management for social protection: Social registries and integrated beneficiary registries*. Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia).
- > Barca, V., & Beazley, R. (2019). *Building on government systems for shock preparedness and response: The role of social assistance data and information systems*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.
- > Chirchir, R., & Kidd, S. (2011). *Good practice in the development of management information systems for social protection* (Pension Watch Briefing Paper 05). Development Pathways (UK) and HelpAge International (UK).
- > Inter Agency Social Protection Assessments (ISPA) Identification Systems Tool.
- > Leite, P., George, T., Sun, C., Jones, T., & Lindert, K. (2017). *Social registries for social assistance and beyond: A guidance note and assessment tool*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

6.9 Monitoring and evaluation

- > Browne, E. (2014). *Social transfer evaluation syntheses* (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report 1066). Birmingham: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.
- > Dissanayake, R., Stephenson, Z., & Greenslade, M. (2012). *Evaluating social transfer programmes. Guidance for DFID country offices*. London: DFID.
- > Inter Agency Social Protection Assessments (ISPA) Tools. A set of practical tools that help countries improve their social protection system by analysing its strengths and weaknesses and offering options for further action.

- > M'Cormack, F. (2011). *Beneficiaries' perspectives in research on cash transfer and social protection programmes* (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report 775). Birmingham: GSDRC, University of Birmingham. (Sets out a range of qualitative methods.)
- > McCord, A., Holmes, R., & Harman, L. (2017). *Indicators to monitor social protection performance. Implications for EC programming*. (Tools and Methods Series, Concept Paper 5). Brussels: European Commission.
- > Roelen, K., & Devereux, S. (2014). *Evaluating outside the box: Mixing methods in analysing social protection programmes* (CDI Practice Paper 6). Brighton: Centre for Development Impact, IDS.
- > World Bank. (2013). *Monitoring and evaluating social protection programs' efforts to respond to natural disasters and climate change-related shocks* (Building Resilience Guidance Note 4). Washington, DC: World Bank.

6.10 Gender

- > FAO. (2018). *Introduction to gender-sensitive social protection programming to combat rural poverty: Why is it important and what does it mean?* (FAO Technical Guide 1). Rome: FAO.
- > FAO. (2018). *Integrating gender into the design of cash transfer and public works programmes* (FAO Technical Guide 2). Rome: FAO.
- > FAO. (2018). *Integrating gender into implementation and monitoring and evaluation of cash transfer and public works programmes* (FAO Technical Guide 3). Rome: FAO.
- > Holmes, R., & Jones, N. (2010). *How to design and implement gender-sensitive social protection programmes*. ODI toolkit. London: ODI.
- > Sida. (2019). *Gender and social protection. Gender tool box*. Stockholm: Sida.
- > Women's Refugee Commission, Mercy Corps, & International Rescue Committee (2018). *Toolkit for optimizing cash-based interventions for protection from gender-based violence: Mainstreaming GBV considerations in CBIs and utilizing cash in GBV response*.

6.11 Inclusion

- > Department of Foreign Aid and Trade. (2014). *Disability and social protection* (Technical Guidance Note). Australian Government.
- > Development Pathways: The Disability Benefit Database.

- > [GIZ tools and guidance for inclusive social protection for people with disabilities.](#)
- > [HelpAge International: Social Pensions Database.](#)
- > Rossi, A., Heinemann, A., Kidd, S., & Noy, I. (2014). *Assessing child-sensitivity in social protection. A toolkit for social transfers.* Kathmandu: UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia.

6.12 Humanitarian–social protection linkages

- > European Commission. (2019). *Social protection across the humanitarian–development nexus: A game changer in supporting people through crises. Summary reference document.* Guidance Package on Social Protection across the Humanitarian–Development Nexus (SPaN).
- > O’Brien, C., Holmes R., & Scott, Z., with Barca, V. (2018). *Shock-responsive social protection systems toolkit – Appraising the use of social protection in addressing largescale shocks.* Oxford: Oxford Policy Management.
- > World Food Programme. (2019) Basic country capacity assessment: Shock-responsive social protection.
 - [English](#)
 - [Spanish](#)
 - [French](#)

6.13 Climate resilience

- > Vincent, K., & Cull, T. (2012). *Adaptive social protection: Making concepts a reality.* Brighton: IDS.
- > Wallis, C., & Buckle, F. (2016). *Social protection and climate resilience: Learning notes on how social protection builds climate resilience.* Evidence on Demand, UK.

6.14 Public works

- > ILO. (2012). *Towards the right to work: A guidebook for designing innovative public employment programmes.* Geneva: ILO.
- > [Inter Agency Social Protection Assessments \(ISPA\) public works programmes tool.](#)
- > McCord, A. (2012). *Appraising productivity enhancing public works programmes social protection toolsheet.* London: ODI.
- > 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.

6.15 Graduation and cash plus

- > de Montesquiou, A., & Sheldon, T., with Hashemi, S. M. (2018). *From extreme poverty to sustainable livelihoods: A technical guide to the graduation approach.* Second edition. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- > Dharmadasa, H., Hashemi, S., Samaranayake, S., & Whitehead, L. (2015). *PROPEL toolkit: An implementation guide to the ultra-poor graduation approach.* New York: BRAC USA.
- > Roelen, K., Devereux, S., Abdulai, A.-G., Martorano, B., Palermo, T., & Ragno, L. P. (2017). *How to make ‘cash plus’ work: Linking cash transfers to services and sectors* (Innocenti Working Paper 2017-10). Florence: UNICEF Office of Research.
- > Slater, R., McCord, A., & Mathers, N. (2014). *Guidance note for DFID: Exploiting the synergies between social protection and economic development.* London: ODI.
- > Sulaiman, M. (2018). *Livelihood, cash transfer, and graduation approaches: How do they fare in cost, impact, and targeting?* In *Boosting growth to end hunger*

Contact

Email: info@k4d.info

Twitter: [@K4D_info](https://twitter.com/K4D_info)

Website: www.ids.ac.uk/k4d

K4D

Knowledge, evidence
and learning for
development

