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Making Social Protection 'Climate-Smart'

Adaptive Social Protection (ASP) aims to reduce the vulnerability of poor people to a range of shocks and ongoing stresses through the integration of social protection (SP), climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR). However there are still few documented examples of social protection programming that specifically accounts for climate change – now and in the future – or that seeks to mitigate the potential of disasters in risk-prone communities. This briefing draws policy-relevant lessons for ASP programming from a social protection programme in Tanzania taking its first steps to become 'climate-smart'.

Awareness of the impacts of climate change on social protection and the potential of social protection instruments to reduce the effects of climate-related shocks has led to the design of some social protection programmes that reflect a more integrated approach to CCA, DRR and SP. In Tanzania, for example, the onset of a new phase of the Social Action Fund has provided the opportunity to learn from experience and to look more closely at the specifics of how these three communities of practice can work more closely together.

Impacts of a changing climate on social protection

Documented trends and community perceptions of climate change in Tanzania suggest that people are *already* observing a warmer and drier climate, changing seasons, less reliable rainfall patterns and more intense rainfall events. Projections for future climate change confirm these observations and predict increased temperatures throughout the country and significant changes in rainfall patterns, including changes in seasonality.

Why do we need Adaptive Social Protection?

The ASP approach recognises and responds to the knowledge that climate change will bring additional stressors and shocks to people, sectors and society, from the household and community to national levels. Taking an integrated approach allows programmes to place more emphasis on measures that both provide longer-term solutions to address the underlying causes of vulnerability and help people prepare for the impacts of climate change. For example, SP instruments such as access to credit can help households respond to the changing climate through investing in livelihoods that are not weather-dependent.

These projections, coupled with other socioeconomic and demographic changes, could have significant implications for Tanzania's Social Action Fund (TASAF III), its beneficiaries and similar programmes elsewhere in the region.

- **Climate change could undermine current and future programme goals.** SP investments should be aimed at delivering programmes that can support complementary livelihood and adaptation goals, for instance through environmental protection measures such as soil conservation.
- **Climate change will affect beneficiaries' ability to cope.** Climatic changes will increase both the vulnerability of existing beneficiaries and the number of people vulnerable to poverty, leading to an increased need for support.
- **Efforts to reduce poverty should help reduce vulnerability to climate change.** This could be achieved through investing in livelihood options that are less sensitive to climate variations and therefore build resilience to changing stresses and shocks.

Although evidence is increasing that longer-term climate trends are affecting people's livelihoods, climate change has not been high on the agenda in Tanzania. Despite this, external support and a local champion have helped to facilitate dialogue around the potential for TASAF III to become more 'climate- and disaster-smart'.

Making Social Protection 'Climate-Smart'

Strengthening the climate and disaster focus in social protection programmes

A series of recommendations emerged from this process to help TASAF III to become progressively climate-proofed over time. These can be applied to similar social protection programmes:

- **Recognise the need for more flexible targeting mechanisms.** Broadening the set of indicators to include ones that identify and respond to climate risk could help social protection programmes to better contribute to improving resilience. Indicators should relate to various types of shocks as well as different levels of vulnerability.
- **Deliver climate-proofed social protection as part of a wider package of support** that strengthens and protects assets and livelihoods and invests in the institutional structures and systems that enable sustainable growth. This means greater dialogue and complementarity between SP, DRR and CCA programming and policy.
- **Build an evidence base through monitoring and evaluation (M&E).** If climate-related risk information from the local level were to be included in M&E systems from the outset, standard impact evaluation processes would then generate critical feedback on how the SP programme is (or isn't) contributing to building resilience to different kinds of shocks.
- **Prioritise building institutional relationships across sectors** to foster integration and ensure political buy-in. One of the critical obstacles for integration is the often found 'silo syndrome' at national level while at the local level decision-making processes are often much more trans-sectoral and integrated in nature.

Adaptive Social Protection policy recommendations for 'climate-smart' social protection

The experience of developing TASAF III in Tanzania provides a clear picture of why climate change should be accounted for in social protection programming and some of the ways in which climate change considerations can begin to be integrated in practice. However it is also clear that – in common with many other countries – there are still a number of critical challenges to overcome in delivering more synergistic programmes.

Realising the benefits of an integrated approach requires a technical understanding of climate change and disaster impacts and the potential of social protection instruments in supporting adaptation; as well as strong institutional linkages and political commitment.

1. Develop technical understanding of climate change impacts.

The impact of climate shocks and stressors depends on the physical risk and on people's ability to respond. Information on climate hazards and stressors needs to be complemented by observational data of real-time change from communities and information regarding the ability of beneficiaries to respond to shocks and stressors and 'bounce back' after disasters.

2. Build political and administrative awareness of climate change.

The lack of broader political engagement with climate issues, both from politicians and civil servants, is limiting the potential for action in many countries. Identifying a political champion who can bridge the sectors and establish a common platform for discussion can be critical in opening up dialogue space to support integration.

3. Start with what communities are already doing.

Often communities have experience of responding to shocks that can be developed further. Engaging communities in decision-making on appropriate plans and investments can enable local innovations that are culturally appropriate and relevant to the local climate context.

4. Embed research, monitoring and learning in programmes.

M&E processes should be designed to capture evidence of the impact of climate change and disasters on beneficiaries and evidence of how social protection does or does not enable beneficiaries to build resilience. Developing flexible programmes that can respond to new knowledge and accommodate change enables M&E systems to become part of a 'learning-by-doing' approach that helps improve programmes over time.

5. Document and share lessons.

There is still much to be learnt from emerging practice that can support Adaptive Social Protection programming. Documenting lessons relating to institutional processes and specific programmatic instruments and interventions that integrate SP, DRR and CCA will contribute to building a wider understanding of both the constraints and the potential of adaptive social protection programmes.

Credits

This briefing draws on the report of the scoping study on 'Mainstreaming Climate Change into TASAF III' commissioned by DFID and written by **Mark Davies, Lars Otto Naess and Christophe Béné**, of the Institute of Development Studies. A full analysis written by **Fran Seballos** can be found at www.adaptive-socialprotection.org

This *In Focus Policy Briefing* was written by **Fran Seballos** and edited by **Clare Gorman**.

The opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of IDS.

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Further reading

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