HLPE REPORT 4

Social protection for food security

A report by

The High Level Panel of Experts

on Food Security and Nutrition

June 2012

CFS Committee on World Food Security

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Committee on World Food Security
High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition
Rome, 2012

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This report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) has been approved by the HLPE Steering Committee.

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FOREWORD

As part of the reform of the World Committee on Food Security (CFS), the High-level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) was established in 2010, for providing credible science and knowledge based advice to underpin policy formulation. The HLPE is directed by a Steering Committee consisting of 15 internationally recognized experts, appointed by the CFS, in the field of sustainable food and nutrition security. The Steering Committee, which I have the privilege to Chair, strives to foster synergy between science and public policy and action.

At its meeting held in October 2010, CFS requested HLPE to prepare reports on Land *Tenure and International Investments in Agriculture* as well as on *Price Volatility and Food Security*. These reports[1] were considered in detail at the CFS meeting held in October 2011. The CFS welcomed the analysis and recommendations of the HLPE, some of which were retained in its final decisions. We are convinced our propositions are useful to Member Governments for appropriate integration in national strategies and policies. We are glad that various stakeholders are making reference to our reports and use them.

In October 2010, the CFS also requested the HLPE to undertake studies on Climate Change and Food Security, and Social Protection for Food Security, which we are presenting this year.

Social protection has risen rapidly up the development policy agenda in the last decade. There is also a clear trend to making social protection, as well as food security, 'rights-based' rather than 'discretionary'. Yet no clear consensus has so far emerged concerning many basic design choices and implementation modalities of social protection policies and programs.

This is why, in 2010, the CFS requested the HLPE to work on Social Protection and more specifically, *on ways to lessen vulnerability through social and productive safety net programs and policies with respect to food and nutritional security, taking into consideration differing conditions across countries and regions*. CFS further suggested that the study *should include a review of the impact of existing policies for the improvement of living conditions and resilience of vulnerable populations, especially small scale rural producers, urban and rural poor as well as women and children*. The CFS also requested the HLPE to report on the impact and *benefits* of social protection measures *on improving local production and livelihoods and promoting better nutrition*.

[1] These reports are publicly available at www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-hlpe.

The present report contains the analysis and recommendations of the High Level Panel of Experts, as approved by its Steering Committee at its meeting 6-8th June 2012 held in Saint Petersburg, Russia. It is now being presented to the CFS.

The HLPE operates with very specific rules, agreed by the CFS, which ensure the scientific legitimacy and credibility of the process, as well as its transparency and openness to all forms of knowledge. The Steering Committee of the HLPE attaches great importance to sound methodology and follows a rigorous procedure.[2]

This report has been produced by a Project Team appointed by the Steering Committee, and under its oversight. The Project Team consisted of Stephen Devereux of South Africa, who served as the Team Leader, and Wenche Barth Eide (Norway), John Hoddinott (Canada), Nora Lustig (Argentina) and Kalanidhi Subbarao (India), as Members. Prof Catherine Bertini, with the support of Alain de Janvry, served as the Convener of the Steering Committee's oversight for this study. My thanks go to all of them as well as to the entire Steering Committee, whose Members offered generously their time and knowledge for developing our analysis and recommendations. Sincere thanks also go to Vincent Gitz, HLPE Coordinator and head of the Secretariat of HLPE, for their untiring efforts and exceptional work, without which the report could not have been completed within the prescribed time frame. Above all, my gratitude goes to the Invisible College of participants in our open electronic consultations and to our anonymous peer reviewers. They all provided valuable comments and inputs, an indisputable strength to our process and to the quality of our work.

In the past, social protection started at the level of families where an economically or physically handicapped member used to be taken care of by the other members of the family. Gradually, the joint family system gave way to small families mainly comprising the husband and wife. The absence of effective social protection measures at the family and community levels is one of the causes for extreme distress and destitution. Now that Governments are assuming the responsibility for providing appropriate social protection measures to prevent poverty-induced hunger, it is important to ensure that the principle "bread with human dignity" underpins social safety net programmes.

Our Report emphasizes that in order to ensure food security for all and forever, both intra-generational and inter-generational social protection measures should receive attention. Inter-generational social protection measures will help to end maternal and foetal malnutrition leading to infants having low birth weight, which places them under severe handicaps in later life, including impaired cognitive ability, obesity and diabetes.

[2] The procedure is described in more detail in Appendix 2.

All countries should design and implement a comprehensive legally empowered social protection system to provide every citizen an opportunity for a productive and healthy life. To decide on the bottom line of the steps to be taken, it will be useful to adopt the concept of *Food Security Floor*, outlined in the Report.

At the global level, CFS should help in bringing out an *Annual Social Protection Monitor,* which provides data on the steps taken in different countries to achieve the goal of sustainable food security through a rights and life cycle approach to entitlements. Indicators to measure the impact of social safety net programmes should include a gender audit. CFS should also promote steps for achieving convergence and synergy among various national, bilateral and multilateral programmes in the field.

It is our hope that this Report will stimulate not only lively discussion at the forthcoming CFS meeting, but will also help national governments to formulate and implement social protection measures against hunger based on a “rights” approach on a Food Security Floor Platform.

My sincere thanks go to Ambassador Yaya Olaniran, Chairperson, and the Members of the CFS Bureau and Advisory Group for their encouragement and support.

M.S. Swaminathan, 22 June 2012

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Food insecurity refers to both the inability to secure an adequate diet today and the risk of being unable to do so in the future. Social protection is a menu of policy instruments that addresses poverty and vulnerability, through social assistance, social insurance and efforts at social inclusion.

Social protection has risen rapidly up the development policy agenda. This report aims to review evidence and experience, and proposes recommendations for using social protection more effectively to protect and promote food security. The analysis is framed by the recognition that the right to adequate food and the right to social protection are human rights under international law, and that implementing social protection policies and programmes using a rights based approach is not only morally and legally appropriate but is likely to lead to improved food security outcomes.

People who are already poor are vulnerable to hunger because they lack the resources to meet their basic needs on a daily basis. They are also highly vulnerable to even small shocks that will push them closer to destitution, starvation, even premature mortality. The appropriate social protection response to chronic poverty-related food insecurity is social assistance linked to 'livelihood promotion' measures that enhance incomes. People who are not poor now but face the risk of future poverty are vulnerable to hunger if these risks materialise and they are inadequately protected against them (they will face transitory food insecurity). These people need effective 'social safety nets'.

Social protection systems should not be seen as 'deadweight' burdens on fiscal systems. Well-designed social protection interventions are good for growth. In particular, by preventing the depletion of assets and reducing the personal risk of investing for the poor, social protection can be a 'win-win' strategy: pro-poor and pro-growth.

Principal observations

1) Household-level vulnerability to poverty and hunger is most often associated with threats to livelihoods. Vulnerability can increase over time if households face repeated shocks that steadily erode their assets. One function of social protection is to install 'safety nets' to prevent this from happening – for example, by providing cash or food transfers or public works employment during periods of crisis and during the annual 'hungry season', as an alternative to poor households having to sell their productive assets or take their children out of school to buy food, thus contributing to the long run reproduction of poverty. Individual vulnerability and appropriate social protection measures can be analysed using a life-course framework. One under-appreciated feature of vulnerability is that it is persistent and recurrent, sometimes cyclical (e.g. seasonal).

2) Social protection covers a wide array of instruments designed to address the vulnerability of people's lives and livelihoods – through *social insurance,* offering protection against risk and adversity throughout life; through *social assistance,* offering payments and in kind transfers to support and enable the poor; and through *social inclusion efforts* that enhance the capability of the marginalised to participate fully in economic and social life and to access social protection and other social services.

3) A fundamental distinction must not be forgotten in social protection programming, between support to labour-constrained 'vulnerable groups' (e.g. young orphans or poor older persons), who might need long-term social assistance and have limited potential to 'graduate' out of poverty; and support to the 'working poor', who can benefit from the synergies between social assistance and growth-oriented developmental programmes, ultimately 'graduating' out of social safety nets.

4) Social assistance programmes that target women with social transfers or public works employment are likely to achieve greater impact on household food security than when men are targeted, because of women's dominant roles as food producers and carers within families. For this reason, women are

often registered as recipients of food or cash transfers, and gender quotas are established on many public works programmes. However, the trade-offs that women are often forced to make between their productive and reproductive roles mean that careful attention must be paid to designing programmes in gender-sensitive ways.

5) The fact that access to food and to social protection are universal human rights, recognised by most states, provides the basis for a more effective and equitable approach to implementation, especially when these rights are underpinned by appropriate national legislation and when mechanisms are introduced into programmes that reinforce these rights by upgrading a 'handout' to a justiciable claim.

6) The various causes of food insecurity can be counteracted by a large array of appropriate social protection responses, while noting that complementing these with other options such as job creation and agricultural extension services may offer more sustainable solutions in the long run. Food production by smallholder farmers can be boosted with input subsidies, while harvest failures or livestock losses can be compensated with agricultural insurance. Unemployment or underemployment can be addressed, temporarily at least, by public works programmes. Problems of market access to food can be addressed on the demand side (food price stabilisation, price subsidies) or on the supply side (grain reserve management). Inadequate access to food can be addressed directly, through transfers of food (supplementary feeding, school feeding) or of cash (conditional or unconditional). While social protection is associated mainly with social transfers, this disaggregation shows that it offers a much larger menu of options. There is now enough empirical evidence on most of these instruments to draw lessons on the design and implementation of comprehensive frameworks that effectively combine several instruments into a coherent social protection system.

7) ***Input subsidies*** generally have positive impacts on agricultural production and farmers' incomes, reducing rural poverty and enhancing household and national food security. Subsidies can be beneficial to women farmers, whose access to commercially purchased inputs is often constrained. Notwithstanding several success stories, national-scale input subsidy programmes are extremely expensive and inefficient if generalised, and difficult to target at poor smallholders without large leakages to better-off farmers. They can result in negative secondary impacts on trade, markets, and the environment. Once introduced, input subsidy policies tend to be politically difficult to modify or abolish.

8) In contexts of high poverty, high risks and high premiums, privately provided ***crop and livestock insurance*** services cannot replace publicly provided social protection in the near future. There is an important role for the public sector in nurturing these nascent insurance markets. Weather-indexed insurance could provide governments with an effective social protection mechanism in the context of climate change, but much remains to be explored in expanding the uptake of this innovative approach.

9) ***Public works programmes*** have proved to be an effective instrument to deal with covariate shocks (e.g. floods and droughts), enabling consumption smoothing by food insecure households, but experience varies a great deal across countries. Successful programmes have made a big difference to creating or maintaining useful infrastructure (e.g. rural feeder roads), and improving farm yields (e.g. terracing and irrigation projects), thereby enhancing the incomes and food security of the rural poor. Common criticisms of public works – that heavy manual labour reduces the net nutritional value of food or cash wages and can exclude women and the labour-constrained poor, that assets often deteriorate after the project ends, and that these programmes are susceptible to corruption – can be addressed by careful design, implementation and monitoring.

10) High food prices and price volatility have become one of the most important threats to food security worldwide. The standard recommendation given to governments is to let domestic prices adjust. However, since food represents a relatively large share of developing countries' consumption

basket, rapidly rising food prices cause inflationary pressure, hurt the living standards of many (frequently the majority) of the poor and near-poor and, in quite a few instances, trigger widespread social discontent. To avoid such outcomes governments often resort to a variety of interventions designed to put a wedge between international and domestic food prices, such as price controls and general price subsidies, taxes and tariff reductions, export restrictions (from export taxes to outright export bans) and releasing buffer stocks or emergency food reserves. A thorough discussion of policies to stabilise domestic food prices and macroeconomic responses can be found in the first HLPE report, on 'Price volatility and food security' (HLPE 2011).

11) A direct, untargeted ***food subsidy*** that lowers the price of a key staple for all consumers in a country tends to increase food consumption, especially by low-income consumers. Generalised food subsidies are politically more acceptable and administratively simpler than many alternative policies. However, they have many disadvantages. Their distributional impacts are regressive, inasmuch as the non-poor generally benefit more than the poor, while their costs (as a percentage of GDP) have risen so high as to be fiscally unsustainable in some countries, crowding out other essential social expenditures. Targeted subsidisation of staple food is a cheaper and less inefficient way to provide income support and food security to the poor, though accurate and cost-efficient targeting always presents challenges.

12) ***Grain reserve management*** was a major component of food security policies in the 1960s and 1970s. After a complex and difficult history, their role has greatly diminished, because they are often considered as a costly and inefficient mechanism. Nonetheless, the release of public food stocks did take place in many countries during the 2007/08 food price spike. National-level reserves can ensure that supplies of emergency food aid are readily available, and grain reserve management can complement other social protection instruments that support national and household food security. The appropriate form, level and financing of such reserves require careful planning, and their management – procurement, storage and release protocols – requires constant vigilance.

13) ***School feeding*** programmes have dual objectives: reducing hunger and improving food security, particularly for children; and increasing human capital accumulation by providing incentives for children, particularly girls, to attend school and by providing food which helps children to concentrate and improve learner performance. Studies show that school feeding does increase the food consumption of learners, and many programmes have also improved learners' micronutrient status. Most programmes rely on geographic targeting, operating in localities where poverty or food insecurity is most prevalent. Sourcing food locally – 'home grown school feeding' – has an additional food security benefit, by providing a source of effective demand for local smallholders. Set against these economic and social benefits are the costs of delivering school meals. School feeding can be a valuable component of a broader approach to addressing food insecurity, especially where target populations such as adolescent girls are hard to reach with other interventions. They have additional value where they can be scaled up in response to shocks.

14) ***Supplementary feeding*** is used in this report in relation to children under five years of age, including the especially vulnerable group of young children from 6 months until their second birthday in need of 'complementary feeding' while continuing on breastmilk, and pregnant and lactating women. For these groups, providing nutritious food including micronutrient supplements (vitamin A, iron and folic acid in particular) can be seen as 'intergenerational social protection'. There is concern among many in the nutrition community about a new trend to promote the use of so-called Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Foods – initially designed for severely malnourished children – also for prevention of malnutrition, with the risk of creating dependency on this type of food.

15) ***Conditional cash transfers*** (CCTs) have three defining characteristics: they target poor regions and identify poor households within those regions; they provide cash (and sometimes in-kind transfers such as nutritional supplements) usually to the mother or primary caregiver; and in order to receive these transfers, recipients must commit to undertaking certain actions (e.g. sending their children to

school and clinic). As such, CCTs aim to reduce both short-term food insecurity and the long-term intergenerational transmission of poverty and vulnerability. Studies indicate that CCTs can improve the quantity of calories consumed and the quality of diets, as well as the levels of achievement at school. Critics of conditionality point out that it increases the administrative costs and complexity of running cash transfer programmes. Some households may find the conditions too difficult to meet, and the services to which conditions are attached might not be available, or might be low quality. From a human rights perspective, some argue that it is indefensible to attach any conditions to the receipt of social transfers. This needs to be weighed against the interests of the child, not always fully represented by parents, and the gains in political support for transfer programmes when conditionalities are attached.

16) ***Unconditional cash transfers*** include government-run social grants for poor and vulnerable groups, as well as small-scale pilot projects usually financed by donor agencies and implemented by NGOs. While conditional cash transfers are common in Latin America, unconditional cash transfers are more popular in Africa, where public services are often less developed. Large-scale cash transfer programmes can have substantial positive impacts on food insecurity and poverty. South Africa's seven social grant schemes doubled the share of national income received by the poorest 20%, while the Child Support Grant alone has halved the poverty gap. Several studies have found a direct impact of unconditional cash transfers on food security and nutrition outcomes. Apart from direct consumption effects, cash transfers can also stimulate investment in agriculture and other livelihood activities by relaxing liquidity constraints. Cash transfers give choice to beneficiaries and support markets and local economic development. But cash is less effective where markets are weak and food prices are high or volatile; in such cases, direct food transfers may achieve better food security outcomes.

17) The food security impacts of social protection programmes can be strengthened by linking them to ***complementary interventions***. The risk of not linking social protection to sectoral programmes is that social protection will substitute for these programmes by default. This risk is exacerbated when social protection programmes are externally financed, because this reduces the incentive for government to invest either in social protection or in the under-invested sectors for which social protection programmes are compensating. This is one reason why government ownership of social protection programmes is crucial. Another reason is that government accountability follows more easily from government ownership.

18) Instead of single social protection instruments, a more effective approach is to combine several instruments that meet different needs of different groups, or the same groups at different times, into ***comprehensive programmes***, thereby exploiting synergies between instruments. Examples include the Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction programme in Bangladesh, the Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme in Rwanda, and Zero Hunger in Brazil. A new proposal in this report is the 'Food Security Floor', a similar concept to the 'Social Protection Floor', but which focuses on realising the right to food.

19) Several issues and challenges arise in the process of designing and implementing social protection programmes: how to target programmes accurately? how to avoid 'dependency'? etc. – and there is a growing body of evidence on each of these topics.

20) ***Targeting*** is any mechanism that identifies individuals who are eligible to receive support from a programme, and screens out the ineligible. There are three powerful reasons for targeting: to transfer resources to people who are food insecure, to focus limited resources where they are most needed, and for redistributive equity. But targeting needs to be well designed and implemented, to avoid the risk of transferring resources to ineligible or non-needy people (inclusion error), or of failing to transfer resources to eligible people (exclusion errors). There are also administrative costs, depending on the targeting mechanism, that take resources away from transfers to the poor. Substantive reviews indicate that targeted programmes, compared to universal transfers, provide greater resource flows to

the poor and food insecure, and that there is no universally superior way of targeting among a large array of options.

21) ***Cash transfers***, in contrast to food transfers, provide recipients with the freedom to choose whatever they wish to consume, can stimulate local agricultural production and non-agricultural activities, and is often cheaper than distributing food aid. But the provision of cash requires well-functioning local food markets to avoid inflationary effects, and efficient delivery systems to minimise risks of theft or corruption. Also, recipients of social assistance should have some say in the form of assistance that they receive, but beneficiary preferences are complex. For example, nominating women as recipients of cash transfers – as many social protection programmes now do – empowers them economically, but women often prefer food as they are more likely to control food than cash within their households.

22) Governments across the world are often resistant to introducing social protection, especially social transfers, because they have concerns about creating ***dependency*** among beneficiaries. Evidence suggests that well-designed social protection programmes do not necessarily create dependency. Instead, they help to reduce the burden of dependency within poor families and communities in the short-term, and can reduce dependency in the long-term by stimulating children's participation in education and adults' participation in labour markets.

23) ***Graduation*** refers to "a process whereby recipients of cash or food transfers move from a position of depending on external assistance to a condition where they no longer need these transfers, and can therefore exit the programme". It offers funders an exit strategy that allows programmes to be time-bound with fixed terms and fixed budgets. Unlike targeting, there is not yet a rich body of evidence to draw on to guide programme designers on appropriate graduation mechanisms. It must be recognised that some people can never graduate, that crossing a threshold does not necessarily mean the household will be self-reliant in the future, and that premature graduation could leave people worse off than before, if their informal support networks collapse because of their participation in the programme.

24) Even in countries with a well-functioning social safety net, it seems difficult to scale up this safety net to address a sudden shock such as a food price spike or an unemployment crisis. ***Scaling up*** means three things: introduce a new safety net programme; incorporate the new poor (as a result of higher food prices, for example); or increase the size of the transfer to compensate existing beneficiaries, at least partially, for the loss in purchasing power (when the safety net is a fixed amount of cash).

25) ***Accountability*** at every level is a key principle in operationalising social protection programmes in general and a human rights based approach to food security and social protection in particular. This includes putting into place accountability mechanisms at the level of both the state and service providers. To be effective, accountability has to be introduced in social protection programming, especially in government-run programmes that establish a justiciable (legally enforceable) 'social contract' between the state and citizens or residents to deliver food security and social protection, but also in projects financed and implemented by donors or NGOs. Systems must be in place to ensure that programmes are run as anticipated, and that eligible recipients are reached appropriately and are treated with dignity.

Recommendations to policy-makers

1. **Every country should strive to design and put in place a comprehensive and nationally owned social protection system that contributes to ensuring the realisation of the right to adequate food for all.**

   Each country should develop a comprehensive social protection portfolio and action plan that seeks to address structural poverty and food insecurity, and to achieve MDG1 targets as part of a national food security and poverty reduction strategy. This process should be country-led with rigorous stakeholder consultation, including the active participation of local communities. One possible model for the social protection portfolio is the 'Food Security Floor' as proposed for consideration in this report, which would identify a minimum set of appropriate social protection and other interventions that would realise the right to food in each country. The design should start with a national food security assessment and should include: a mix of appropriate tools, goals and intended beneficiaries, targeting and registration methodologies, institutional arrangements, delivery mechanisms, accountability systems, sound monitoring and evaluation that includes impact indicators for nutrition, funding requirements and funding sources. Ensuring inter-ministerial and cross-sectoral coordination is crucial, to ensure that social protection is integrated with broader food security programming.

2. **Social protection systems should pursue a 'twin-track' strategy to maximise their positive impacts on food security, by providing essential assistance in the short-term and supporting livelihoods in the long-term.**

   Social protection is most effective when it delivers social assistance or social insurance to food insecure people, while simultaneously protecting or building productive assets that contribute to economic growth and reduce the risk of future food insecurity. Examples are public works programmes and conditional cash transfers, which transfer food or cash while investing in physical infrastructure and human capital formation respectively. This requires strong linkages from social protection to complementary sectors such as education, health and agriculture. Social protection should also enhance poor people's access to key institutions, including markets and financial services. Any sustainable growth strategy needs a social protection component.

3. **Social protection needs to be better designed and implemented to address vulnerability to poverty and hunger, for instance by being accessible on demand to everyone who needs assistance, and by putting contingency financing in place for rapid scaling up when required.**

   Most social protection programmes are not well designed to manage vulnerability. Chronically vulnerable individuals might need permanent assistance, recognising that not everyone can graduate out of food insecurity and reliance on transfers. Social protection must be predictable and reliable, to counteract the unpredictability and vulnerability of livelihoods that is a fundamental source of food insecurity, and it should be appropriate and sensitive to vulnerabilities at particular stages of life. Social protection systems should be designed in such a way that they can respond quickly to shocks such as droughts, floods and food price spikes. Positive examples include demand-driven employment guarantee schemes in South Asia, and safety net programmes in East Africa that added new beneficiaries during the 2011 food crisis.

4. **Social protection for food security should be underpinned by the human rights to food and social protection at every level, from governments signing up to global agreements, to national legislation and programme implementation.**

   The right to adequate food and the right to social protection, as recognised in international human rights law, should be incorporated into national legislation, so that governments recognise their

duty to implement and deliver these basic human rights and residents have a legal basis for making food security claims on the state. Following from recommendations by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, this could take the form of a 'framework law' which spells out the targets or goals to be achieved, the timeframe for achievement of those targets, institutional responsibility for the process, national mechanisms for its monitoring, as well as possible recourse procedures. Social protection programmes should include accountability mechanisms such as grievance procedures and social audits, which effectively upgrade social protection from charity or welfare to an enforceable entitlement, leading to improved service delivery and greater effectiveness in reducing food insecurity, while building a rights based approach into social protection programming.

5. **Since a large proportion of the world's food insecure people earn their living from agriculture, mainly but not only as smallholder farmers, social protection for food security should support agricultural livelihoods directly.**

   The majority of poor food-producing smallholders in developing countries are net food buyers. Social protection instruments that promote agriculture should therefore be considered. These include input subsidies, public works projects that create agricultural assets such as irrigation, and home-grown school feeding that purchases food from local farmers, as well as integrated programmes that link cash or food transfers to agricultural livelihood packages and extension services. The 'twin-track' principle also applies here: poor farmers need support to increase or stabilise crop yields, while the poorest need immediate protection against hunger. Support to consumers (e.g. food price subsidies) should not undermine incentives for farmers. Special attention should be paid to the roles of women as food producers and care-takers with responsibility for food provision within their families.

Recommendations to the CFS

6 The CFS should actively encourage, monitor and report on the incorporation of the provisions on the right to adequate food and the right to social protection contained in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and in the corresponding international human rights conventions, into **national legislation and programmes** supported by an enforceable legal framework in all countries.

7 The CFS should support the elaboration and implementation of comprehensive national **social protection portfolio and action plans** in every country, linked to broader food security or poverty reduction strategies. Progress towards developing and implementing these action plans should be monitored and reported annually. The international community should favour funding social protection programmes that have met benchmarks for good practice to be spelt out in a Guidance Note that would need to be elaborated, and might include for example that the action plan was subjected to a rigorous civil society consultation, and that all proposed programmes observe human rights principles in their design and implementation. The CFS should promote the dissemination of good practice in social protection programming for food security, including sharing lessons from country experiences on the minimum information and institutional requirements for a comprehensive social protection system; recognising the role of non-state actors in social protection provisioning – international organisations, NGOs, civil society, farmers' organisations, the private sector, as well as informal or 'traditional' social protection mechanisms – and proposing coordination modalities for mobilising these actors to work together effectively.

8 While nationally owned social protection programmes for food security is the ideal, many governments will require **technical and financial support** from development partners and United Nations organisations, at least for an interim period. Reductions in food insecurity will be more rapid and more sustainable if the international community commits additional resources to expanding the provision of social protection, and the CFS should encourage this. The findings

presented in this report provide persuasive evidence on the human and economic returns to investments in social protection for food security, so this argument is becoming easier to make as the evidence base accumulates.

9 The CFS should advocate for monitoring and evaluation of the impact of social protection programmes to include impact indicators for improvement in the **nutritional status** of beneficiaries. As a minimum, dietary diversity should be included as one such indicator, to provide a comparable measure of impact that can help to identify the most effective tools for addressing structural hunger and poverty. All monitoring systems and evaluations should include a gender audit, to capture potential heightened risks facing women and the girl child. More broadly, the CFS should support international efforts to improve the quality of evaluations, specifically for programmes related to food security and nutrition.

10 Many issues in social protection design and implementation remain unresolved, and many instruments are controversial, often because of bad experiences with weak programmes or because information is inadequate. Research into social protection is an international public good, so the costs should not necessarily be carried entirely by the implementing country. The CFS could play a role in ensuring that rigorous and credible **evaluations** are conducted – especially of innovative national social protection programmes with food security objectives – and that they receive appropriate levels of financial and technical support from the international community.

11 The CFS should encourage the establishment of a global system of **yearly notifications** on social protection, partly to share information and partly to create a platform for strengthening accountability. This would include reporting by countries on progress towards implementing social protection portfolios and action plans, also by international agencies on social protection activities they are supporting in each country. Such reporting could be presented in an annual 'Social Protection Monitor' and should include progress towards establishing the right to food and to social protection in national legislation, as well as actions taken in respect of realising these rights through policies and programmes. More generally, social spending statistics in developing countries are not reported systematically by any organisation. The CFS should recommend that the regular compilation of social spending statistics, including spending on social protection and food security programmes, be assigned to one of the multilateral organisations of the UN system.

12 The CFS should ensure that the recommendations included in this report are incorporated into the **Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition**.

INTRODUCTION

In October 2010 the newly reformed UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) requested its High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) to conduct a study on social protection, in particular to assess: "ways to lessen vulnerability through social and productive safety nets programs and policies with respect to food and nutritional security, taking into consideration differing conditions across countries and regions. This should include a review of the impact of existing policies for the improvement of living conditions and resilience of vulnerable populations, especially small scale rural producers, urban and rural poor as well as women and children. It should also take into account benefits for improving local production and livelihoods and promoting better nutrition."

With this in mind, this report focuses on how social protection can be used to mitigate – and, whenever possible, eliminate – food insecurity and hunger for households and individuals. This report therefore aims to serve two functions. It provides an evidence-based review of social protection interventions that have food security outcomes or intentions. Second, it supports efforts to frame social protection for food security in the context of international norms, principles and procedures for human rights, especially the rights to adequate food and to be free from hunger and the right to social security as part of economic, social and cultural rights.

This report is produced at a time of unprecedented threats to food security, but also opportunities. The world economy seems more uncertain and more volatile than at any time in living memory. The recent global food price crisis, the ongoing Eurozone financial crisis, climate change, land grabbing, and biofuel production often threatening smallholders' access to land to grow for food and for cash – all are affecting food security from the global to the individual level, directly and indirectly. In most regions, inequality is worsening, both within and between countries. The positive side of these rapid changes is that economic growth is high in Asia, Latin America and also in some African countries, where poverty is falling rapidly. Such growth generates more tax revenue, and because growth is not evenly distributed and many people remain poor and food insecure or even further impoverished, this increased revenue allows allocations to remedial interventions such as social protection.

Within development policies, social protection is therefore gaining attraction as a means to mitigate vulnerability and to tackle food insecurity. Comprising a range of potential measures for managing risk and vulnerability and complementing poverty reduction initiatives, social protection is ideally suited to dealing with volatility and uncertainty. As this report shows, well-designed and well-implemented social protection programmes can insulate people and communities against the worst consequences of rapid changes and shocks. Social protection programmes can strengthen human resources for greater collective efforts in their own and society's interest, and improve social cohesion. Because social protection protects and builds assets at the individual, household and community levels, and because effective safety nets give people the confidence to take moderate risks, social assistance and social insurance schemes can also stimulate local economic activity. Evidence from Latin America, Asia and Africa confirms that investment in social protection is an investment in growth.

Fundamentally, the main purpose of social protection should be to benefit the livelihoods and well-being of households and their individual members of all ages. When the United Nations in 1948 adopted the Universal Declaration on Human Rights it was to promote the freedom and dignity of every human being. One of these rights is the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living. In practice this means that everyone should have satisfactory conditions of livelihood with effective and functioning entitlements to ensure these rights, which include the right to adequate food and the right to needed social assistance and security. This underpins and further strengthens the opportunities for positive synergies between social protection and food security.

This report is structured as follows. **Chapter 1** introduces key concepts and definitions of food security, vulnerability and social protection, and the essentials of a human rights based approach to implementing the rights to food and to social protection. **Chapter 2** reviews empirical evidence on a range of social protection instruments that promote food security: food and agricultural input subsidies, agricultural insurance mechanisms, public works programmes, food price stabilisation, grain reserves, school feeding and supplementary feeding, and conditional or unconditional cash transfers. **Chapter 3** argues that social protection instruments function best not alone but in national systems, as part of integrated programmes and with strong linkages to complementary sectors, and reviews relevant experiences from Brazil, India and Africa as well as conceptual approaches such as the 'Social Protection Floor'. **Chapter 4** explores cross-cutting issues in the design and implementation of social protection and food security programmes, recognising that many challenges remain unresolved – these include targeting, modalities (cash or food), dependency, graduation, affordability, scalability and accountability. **Chapter 5** presents our conclusions. Note that **recommendations** are presented at the front of this report, in two sets: one for consideration by policy-makers and the other for consideration by the CFS. Following the list of **References**, **Appendix 1** provides further information, drawing from international human rights law and practice, on the application of a human rights based approach to social protection for food security.

1 CONCEPTS

This chapter introduces the key concepts of food security, vulnerability and social protection, as used in this report, explains the role that social protection can play in addressing food insecurity and vulnerability, and provides the rationale for a human rights based approach to food security and social protection.

1.1 Food security

In 1996 the World Food Summit adopted the following definition of food security, which implicitly identifies the four dimensions of food security: availability, access, stability and utilisation.

> "Food security exists when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO, 1996).

While the last 20 years have seen a deepening understanding of the concept of food security, its measurement has lagged behind. At the global level, there are no direct estimates of the number of food insecure people. The most widely-cited indirect measure is the 'prevalence of undernourishment' (POU), constructed by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), which estimates the proportion of each country's population whose dietary energy consumption (DEC) is lower than their dietary energy requirements (DER) (Cafiero and Gennari, 2011). By this measure, the global prevalence of hunger dropped from 33% to 14% between 1970 and 2000 – significant progress that was partially reversed by the 2008 food price crisis, when the figure first spiked up, then drifted down to 16% in 2010 (FAO, 2010).[3] Currently, 925 million people are considered hungry (Table 1). Most live in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Approximately 50% are in farming households, 22% are the rural landless, 20% live in urban areas and 8% are resource-dependent (pastoralists, fisherfolk, etc). While the world is increasingly urbanised, most hungry and food insecure people are still found in rural areas.

Table 1. Global estimates of undernourishment (hunger), 1970–2010

Period	Number of undernourished (millions)	Prevalence (percentage)
1969-71	875	33
1979-81	850	25
1990-92	848	16
1995-97	792	14
2000-02	836	14
2006-08	850	13
2009	1023*	18
2010	925*	16

Source: FAO, 2010 (for 1969-71 and 1979-81) and FAOSTAT for others (http://www.fao.org/economic/ess/ess-fs/fs-data/ess-fadata/en/). * Data for 2009 and 2010 are FAO extrapolations based on United States Department of Agriculture projections.

[3] There is a lively ongoing debate surrounding the estimation of these figures.

These estimates give no sense of the severity of hunger – they make no distinction between someone with DEC slightly below the DER and someone whose DEC is 30% below. Also, the POU is a measure of chronic food insecurity, but hunger and food insecurity can also be cyclical or seasonal (the annual *soudure* in the West African Sahel) or transitory (food crises like the Somalia famine of 2011). Social protection responses must address seasonal and transitory as well as chronic food insecurity – not with reactive emergency responses (which are humanitarian interventions rather than social protection), but by extending social insurance mechanisms and putting in place safety nets that are scalable when needed.

1.2 Vulnerability

Food insecurity refers to both the inability to secure an adequate diet today (i.e. hunger) and the risk of being unable to do so in the future. People who are already poor are vulnerable to hunger because they lack the resources to meet their basic needs on a daily basis (they face chronic food insecurity). They are also highly vulnerable to even small shocks that will push them closer to destitution, starvation, even premature mortality. As discussed below, the appropriate social protection response to poverty-related food insecurity is social assistance, linked to 'livelihood promotion' measures that enhance incomes. People who are not poor now but face the risk of future poverty are vulnerable to hunger if these risks materialise and they are inadequately protected against them (they face transitory food insecurity).

Vulnerability to food insecurity operates at several levels – national, household and individual – and social protection responses are available at each level. Conversely, food insecurity and vulnerability intensify in the absence of social protection.

National-level vulnerability depends greatly on whether scalable social protection systems are in place. The recent contrasting histories of Tonga and Yemen illustrate this point (Box 1).

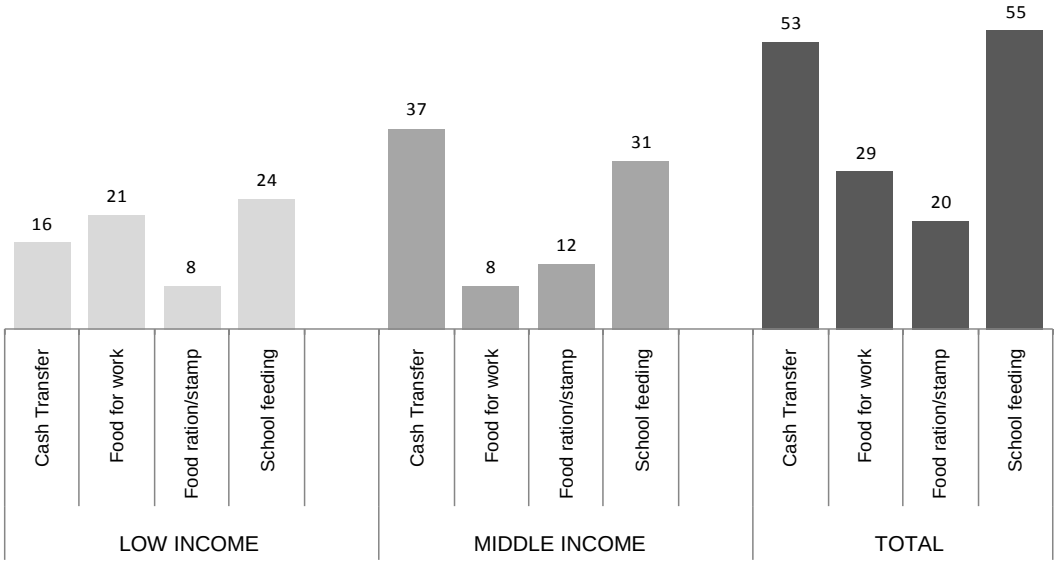
Box 1. Tonga and Yemen: contrasting vulnerability with and without social protection

Tonga is a small island economy in the Asia-Pacific Region, with a population of about 100,000. Key characteristics such as a narrow undiversified economy, low economic growth, global interdependence and exceptional dependence on remittances left Tonga particularly exposed to recent global volatility. Agricultural exports fell by 70% since 2006 and fish and marine exports by 62%. Remittances, which account for 32% of GDP, declined by T$ 82 million (US$ 46m) in 2010-11, seriously hurting women who were left to fend for themselves in the absence of their spouses in other countries. These shocks, plus economic growth below 2% annually, caused poverty to increase from 16.2% in 2001 to 22.5% in 2009. Tonga has absolutely no social safety net – people depend on informal family support systems that have dried up due to the crisis. Efforts are now being made, with donor support, to devise a viable safety net programme to deal with current and future economic crises (World Bank, 2011b).

Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the Middle East; one-third of its population is undernourished and living in poverty. But Yemen has a social safety net system that includes cash assistance and the Social Fund for Development (SFD), which aims to extend the provision of basic social services. Both programmes were scaled up in response to the recent crisis, and SFD also designed and implemented Labour-Intensive Projects to provide temporary employment for poor families. An Emergency Social Safety Nets project was launched that delivered cash assistance of US$ 15-20 for 12 months to poor households, alongside a second public works programme that constructed useful community assets and increased temporary employment opportunities. The success of this set of responses was attributed to the activities of SFD before the crisis struck, which allowed for a rapid scaling up of ongoing programmes as well as effective piloting of a new instrument (Marzo and Mori 2012, p. 26).

The case of Yemen is atypical. When the 2007/08 food crisis struck, 19 of 49 low-income countries had no social protection programmes in place at all (Figure 1). Even when safety nets are large, they are not designed to respond to shocks – the size of social transfers and, more importantly, the numbers of beneficiaries do not automatically expand following a food price shock (Lustig 2008; Grosh *et al.*, 2011).

Figure 1. The 2007/08 food crisis: safety nets in low- and middle-income countries



Source: Lustig (2008, p. 53).
Note: Income classification data from the World Bank: the graph shows the 30 (out of 49) low-income and 46 (out of 95) middle-income countries that implemented one or more programmes.

Household-level vulnerability is most often associated with threats to livelihoods. Either livelihoods are inadequate because of resource constraints and low productivity (e.g. farmers with too little land and no access to fertiliser), or livelihoods are risky and susceptible to collapse (e.g. droughts that cause harvest failure). Importantly, the majority of food producing smallholders in many countries are net buyers of food (an estimated 73% of smallholders in Ethiopia and 74% in India), which leaves them vulnerable to both production and market-related risks, and highlights the importance of social protection instruments that support agriculture (de Janvry and Sadoulet, 2011). Livelihood shocks can affect individuals (illness, accidents, retrenchment – when businesses close down or scale back their operations –), or entire communities (floods, epidemics, livestock disease) (Dercon, 2005), or entire economies (financial crises, natural disasters, conflict, widespread food price hikes) (Lustig, 2000). Households with strong and diversified assets, including social networks, are better placed to survive livelihood shocks than households with few assets and no social support systems. Vulnerability can increase over time if households face repeated shocks that steadily erode their assets. One function of social protection is to install 'safety nets' to prevent this happening – for example, by providing cash or food transfers or public works employment during periods of crisis and during the annual 'hungry season', as an alternative to having poor households sell their productive assets to buy food.

Individual vulnerability and appropriate social protection measures can be analysed using a life-course framework – infancy and pre-school (feeding programmes); school-age children (child benefits, school feeding); adolescence (youth training and employment subsidies); working-age adults (public works, farm input subsidies); older persons (pensions) – disaggregated by gender and disability (disability grants). Especially the first 1,000 days – from conception to around 2 years – is a window of opportunity for preventing food and nutrition related processes that can have repercussions in later life, but may still be dealt with during that period. Recent research has demonstrated that the gestational period is critical for future health, not only for the newborn but also for later life in particular

with regard to non-communicable diseases. Animal data suggest that foetal health is modified by genetic and epigenetic regulation – which in turn is governed at least in part by nutritional factors. A good maternal nutritional and health status, including that of the girl child as often early mothers-to-be, is therefore critical to ensuring a good nutrient environment for the foetus in the womb and reducing the risk of low birth weight. Exclusive breastfeeding from 0-6 months is non-negotiable as the full food security for infants in this age bracket and at the same time providing immunity against infections. This should be followed by appropriate feeding with complementary foods from 6-24 months, emphasising that this complements continued breastfeeding through the end of the 1,000 days, when the child can begin to eat the regular family diet.

These multiple dimensions of vulnerability – with various causes that differ for each stage in the life-course – warrant a vulnerability analysis prior to designing social protection or food security interventions. This is too rarely done in practice. Governments and donors are often guided by what resources are available and what instruments have been implemented in the past, or nearby. Many countries in Africa and South Asia have long histories of food aid or public works programmes, while most Latin American countries have adopted conditional cash transfers (CCTs) in recent years. Even if these interventions are evaluated as effective, it is not clear that they meet the needs of all poor and food insecure residents, or that they are the most effective mechanisms in each context. CCTs, for example, usually have no mechanisms to incorporate the 'new poor' as a result of an adverse shock such as rising food prices.

An under-appreciated feature of vulnerability is that it is persistent and recurrent, sometimes cyclical (e.g. seasonal). Some forms of social protection therefore need to be permanent, even if large numbers of people 'graduate' out of poverty and food insecurity. Social protection also needs to be predictable and reliable, to counteract the unpredictability and unreliability of livelihoods that is the source of much of poor people's vulnerability and food insecurity. Permanent, guaranteed and scalable social safety nets will have a major impact on reducing livelihood vulnerability. Very few social protection programmes or national systems meet these basic requirements.

1.3 Social protection

Social protection is a relatively recent addition to the development policy agenda, but it has proliferated rapidly in terms of conceptual frameworks, policy influence, budget allocations, programmes and coverage. One reason for its popularity is that it tackles poverty and vulnerability directly, so its impacts are immediate and invariably evaluated as positive. There are numerous definitions of social protection (for reviews see Standing, 2007; Brunori and O'Reilly, 2010). Most share a focus on managing risk and assisting poor people, while some add a rights dimension. The UK Institute of Development Studies (IDS) proposed a definition that identified three overlapping target groups – the poor, the vulnerable, and the marginalised – with distinct social protection needs.

> "Social protection describes all initiatives that: (1) provide income (cash) or consumption (food) transfers to the poor; (2) protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks; (3) enhance the social status and rights of the excluded and marginalised" (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004, p. 9).

A similar three-pronged definition was adopted by the 2010 European Report on Development, 'Social Protection for Inclusive Development'.

> "A specific set of actions to address the vulnerability of people's life *through social insurance,* offering protection against risk and adversity throughout life; *through social assistance,* offering payments and in kind transfers to support and enable the poor; and *through inclusion efforts* that enhance the capability of the marginalised to access social insurance and assistance" (European Communities, 2010, p. 1).

Other definitions include access to basic services, especially healthcare, and pro-poor livelihood support, such as agricultural input subsidies. Many definitions include social security – contributory schemes to which beneficiaries contribute through, for example, payroll taxes – that provides some income insurance against unemployment, retirement and other disruptions to formal employment. Since the coverage of social security tends to be very low in poor countries where employment is concentrated in the informal sector and self-employment (e.g. smallholder agriculture), social protection is meant to fill this gap by extending social assistance to these 'uncovered' people. This report focuses on non-contributory social protection interventions, including what are typically called social assistance programmes and safety nets, that are funded by general government revenues or grants and loans from multilateral organisations.

Social protection emerged out of an earlier 'social safety nets' agenda, which became prominent in the 1990s as the third prong of the 'new anti-poverty agenda' (World Bank 1990, 2001; Lustig, 1995; Edwards and Lustig, 1997; IADB, 2000). Safety nets were initially seen as a response to shocks, but later broadened their focus to address chronic poverty as well. "Safety nets are programs which protect a person or household against two adverse outcomes in welfare: chronic incapacity to work and earn (*chronic poverty*); and a decline in this capacity from a marginal situation that provides minimal livelihood for survival with few reserves (*transient poverty*)" (Subbarao *et al.*, 1996, p. 2). In the late 1990s, social safety nets faced criticism from the 'left' for being residual welfarist measures that address poverty, food insecurity and unemployment with 'handouts'. Social investment funds were critiqued for not assisting people most affected by shocks such as privatisation and trade liberalisation (Lustig, 2000). Critics from the 'right' – and many governments – raised concerns about displacing informal social support systems such as reciprocity, and creating a 'dependency culture', in a context of limited public resources that could be invested in the 'productive' economic sectors instead.

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 (Lustig, 2001; Holzmann *et al.*, 2003). There is an implicit hierarchy: reducing risk (e.g. raising incomes or assets) is preferred to mitigating risk (e.g. insurance), which is preferable to helping people 'cope' with risk (e.g. emergency food aid, which is a last resort). Social risk management is a useful framework for considering linkages between social protection and food security, but it was critiqued for its narrow conceptualisation of economic risk – ignoring social risks and the structural causes of poverty and food insecurity – and a definition of vulnerability that suggested a bias towards people at risk of future poverty, rather than those already living in poverty.

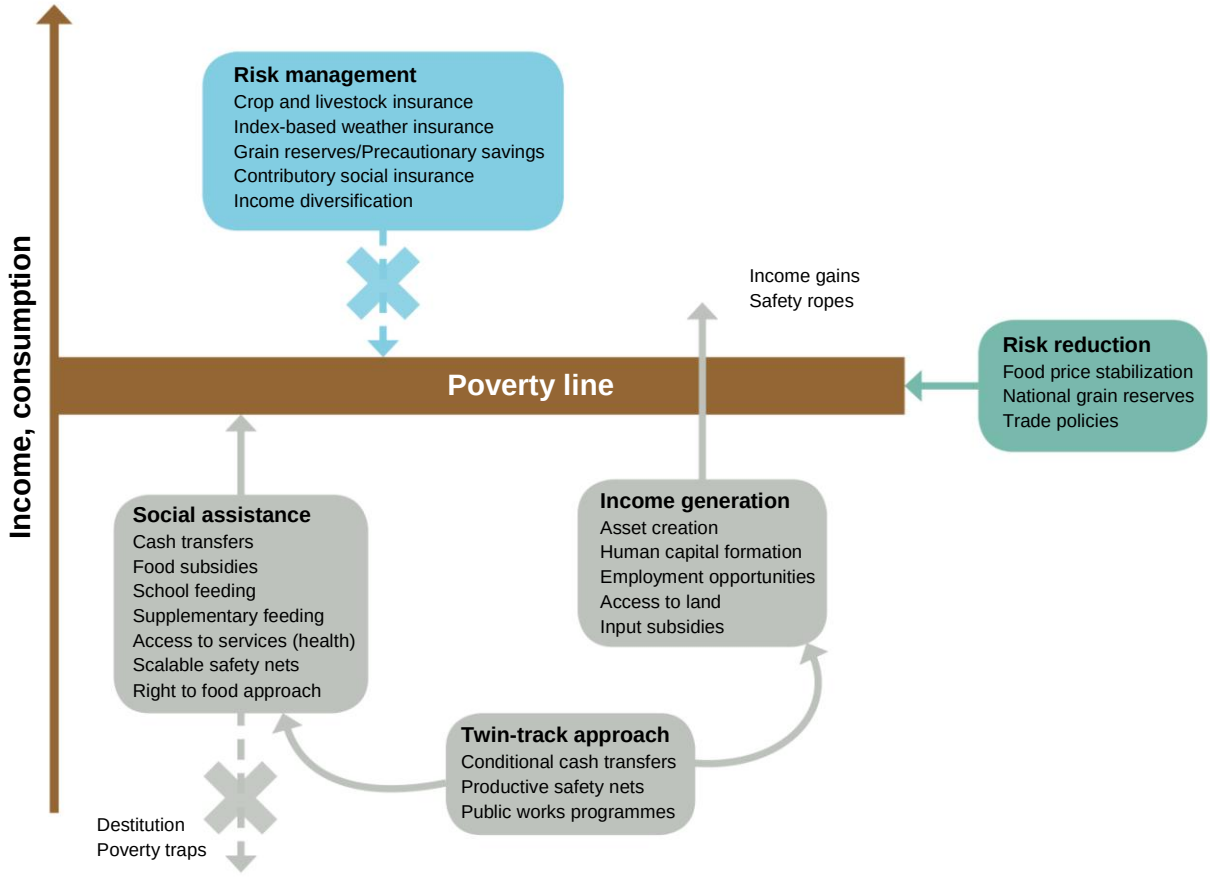
Risk management is one component of a broader conceptual framework called 'transformative social protection', which sees poverty and vulnerability as symptoms of social injustice and argues that social protection should address their structural causes – including social risks such as discrimination and disempowerment – by transforming the social and political conditions that generate poverty and vulnerability (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004). Recent thinking on 'social protection for social justice' (Devereux *et al.*, 2011) extends this logic, arguing that social protection should be provided on an 'entitlement' or 'claims-based' rather than a 'discretionary' basis, and instead of being projectised, should be institutionalised in government systems and underpinned by enforceable legislation that transforms a benevolent gesture into a justiciable right. 'Transformative social protection' has been adapted by numerous agencies and governments for their social protection strategies and policies, but it has been criticised for extending the boundaries of social protection into broader development policy arenas.

The most recent addition to these frameworks is the 'social protection floor', an initiative led by the United Nations that is the first systematic attempt to operationalise a rights based approach to social protection. "A national Social Protection Floor is a basic set of rights and transfers that enables and empowers all members of a society to access a minimum of goods and services" (ILO and WHO

2009, p. 1). 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, in contrast to ‘instrumentalist’ views that see social protection primarily as a sets of tools for achieving poverty reduction and economic growth. Building on minimum standards for social security established by the ILO, the ‘social protection floor’ has two main components: access to ‘essential services’ (such as water and sanitation, nutrition, health and education), and ‘essential social transfers’ (in cash or in kind, to provide a minimum income security) (ILO and WHO, 2009).

Viewed in this way, social protection covers a wide array of instruments and objectives, encompassing both safety nets and so-called ‘safety ropes’ (i.e., mechanisms that enhance income-generating abilities and opportunities for the poor and vulnerable). These can be seen in Figure 2. Note that this set of instruments is broader than those discussed in this report – we do not examine unemployment insurance and non-contributory healthcare, for instance – because our focus is on interventions that address food insecurity most directly.

Figure 2. Social protection at a glance



Source: adapted from de Janvry (*pers. comm.*)

1.4 Human rights

Household food security forms the context in which individuals can enjoy their human right to adequate food as established in international human rights law. Vulnerable individuals can achieve food security or mitigate food insecurity in part through various forms of social protection – itself established as a human right. Evidence also suggests that rights based approaches to food security

and social protection, especially where programmes are underpinned by justiciable legislation and effective accountability mechanisms, can improve food security outcomes.

This section provides some essentials of a human rights based approach. Further factual information for those unfamiliar with international human rights is provided in the Appendix 1.

1.4.1 The right to food and the right to social protection

Based on the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) adopted in 1948, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, adopted in 1966 and entering into force in 1976), spelled out the right to adequate food in Article 11.1 and "the fundamental right to be free from hunger" in Article 11.2. The Covenant is legally binding on Member states that have ratified it (160 States Parties by 1 June 2012). The Covenant sets out the human rights of everyone "without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion" (ICESCR), and outlines the corresponding obligations of States Parties to implement these rights. Also legally binding on States Parties are other conventions of relevance to this study, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989).

The 1996 World Food Summit defined food security in a way that shifted the focus from the global and national levels to households and individuals. The 1996 Summit also reaffirmed "the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right to be free from hunger", and requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Right in consultation with FAO to clarify these rights. This was achieved in 1999 when the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN CESCR), the body mandated to monitor state compliance with the Covenant, provided a detailed interpretation and elaboration of content of the right to food and the corresponding state obligations. This clarification is found in the Committee's General Comment No. 12 on the right to adequate food (GC12), which is the most comprehensive and authoritative interpretation of the normative content of the right to food.

In its paragraph 6 it sets out a broad understanding of the right to adequate food:

> "The right to adequate food is realized when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement. The right to adequate food shall therefore not be interpreted in a narrow or restrictive sense which equates it with a minimum package of calories, proteins and other specific nutrients" (UN CESCR 1999, paragraph 6).

In its General Comment No. 19 (GC19), adopted in 2007, the same Committee provided its interpretation and elaboration of the human right to social security, set out in Article 9 of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In GC19 the Committee states, *inter alia,* that

> "The right to social security includes the right not to be subject to arbitrary and unreasonable restrictions of existing social security coverage, whether obtained publicly or privately, as well as the right to equal enjoyment of adequate protection from social risks and contingencies" (UN CESCR 2008, paragraph 9).

Importantly, GC19 notes "that social security should be treated as a social good, and not primarily as a mere instrument of economic or financial policy" (paragraph 10). Drawing on ILO instruments, the Committee lists in paragraph 12 nine elements of a legally established, publicly administered or supervised and sustainable social security system: "adequate access to health care for all"; cash transfers "to those incapable of working due to ill-health"; non-contributory pensions for all older persons who have no other means of support; unemployment benefits; compensation for

employment-related injury; family and child benefits (sufficient to cover food, clothing, housing, water and sanitation); paid maternity leave; disability benefits; survivor and orphan benefits.

Interestingly, GC19 draws attention to the social protection needs of groups not normally covered by contributory social security systems. “States parties should also consider schemes that provide social protection to individuals belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups, for example crop or natural disaster insurance for small farmers or livelihood protection for self-employed persons in the informal economy” (paragraph 28). GC19 defines social security quite broadly, to cover both contributory and non-contributory schemes, i.e., social insurance and social assistance. “All persons should be covered by the social security system, especially individuals belonging to the most disadvantaged and marginalized groups [...] In order to ensure universal coverage, non-contributory schemes will be necessary” (paragraph 29).

The linkages between food security and social protection are recognised also in GC12: “Socially vulnerable groups such as landless persons and other particularly impoverished segments of the population may need attention through special programmes” (GC12, paragraph 12.1). The subsequent Right to Food Guidelines (FAO, 2005) also address social protection in relation to food security.

1.4.2 Other aspects of a human rights based approach (HRBA) to implementation

In adopting a human rights based approach to policies and programming for the realisation of economic, social and cultural rights in general, and the rights to adequate food and social protection in particular, four sets of issues are implied:

- Make use of the rights set out in the international (and regional) legal instruments, or national where they exist, aided by the General Comments from the relevant monitoring bodies of the United Nations.

- Identify the corresponding obligations by State Parties to implement the rights through manageable and efficient measures. These include the obligation to respect the existing livelihoods when and for whom they are functioning well; to protect those livelihoods against harmful interference by third parties, to facilitate an improved enjoyment of those livelihoods that can be improved, and to provide the necessary assistance to those that cannot on their own secure an adequate livelihood.

- Apply the generally agreed principles of transparency, accountability and non-discrimination in implementing chosen measures, ensuring also effective participation in their design and enhancing the empowerment of the beneficiaries.

- Arrange for appropriate grievance mechanisms and remedies whenever compliance with the human rights provisions have been breached by the State through its agents and institutions.

1.4.3 National implementation of human rights law

The linkages between food security and social protection are recognised in several countries through rights based legislation and programming, often derived from the national Constitution and driven by pressure from civil society, either as participants in policy-making or as activists holding government to account. Instructive examples come from three of the ‘BRICS’ countries – Brazil, India and South Africa.

Box 2. Brazil, India and South Africa: legislating for the rights to food and social protection

Brazil: In 2006 an 'Organic Law for Food and Nutrition Security' was approved by the National Congress, creating the National Food and Nutrition Security System through which the government, with the participation of civil society which jointly designed the law, formulates and implements policies seeking to guarantee the human right to adequate food. In 2009, a nationwide social mobilisation led to the inclusion of food among the social rights established in Article 6 of the Federal Constitution. Bolsa Familia is a legally based programme of cash transfers that especially vulnerable groups are entitled to receive, that can assist them to enjoy this right to food. In 2010, a new law reframing the National School Meal Programme defined school meals as an instrument to promote the right of all children to adequate food. In 2011 the National Council on Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA) launched an extensive report on the realisation of the right to food, and has developed a methodology for monitoring public programmes with a rights based approach.

India: Matters relating to social protection in India are listed in Directive Principles of State Policy under the Constitution: "the State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want". India's Supreme Court interprets article 21 of the Constitution, focusing on the right to life, as including the right to adequate food. Taken together these constitutional human rights provisions support specific entitlements such as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, which guarantees every rural household in India 100 days of employment a year at minimum wages. The National Food Security Bill, if enacted by Parliament, will entitle some 800 million people to purchase staple food at subsidised prices. However, India's Right to Food Network is campaigning to increase the entitlements to food scheduled under the Bill, which are perceived as inadequate to assure household food security.

South Africa: The post-apartheid Constitution, which includes arguably the world's most progressive Bill of Rights, states that "Everyone has the right to have access to … social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependants, appropriate social assistance". Moreover: "The state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation" of this right. Further specified legal rights or entitlements have been established, for example, the Child Support Grant and the non-contributory Older Persons Grant, which all eligible poor children (through their carers) and older persons are legally entitled to claim. Progressive expansions in eligibility and entitlements to social assistance have been driven by vigorous campaigns led by civil society organisations such as the Alliance for Children's Entitlement to Social Security (ACESS), which included initiating successful legal action against the state to raise the age of eligibility for the Child Support Grant from 14 to 18 years.

2 SOCIAL PROTECTION INSTRUMENTS FOR FOOD SECURITY

A useful way of classifying the sources of food insecurity can be derived from Amartya Sen's 'entitlement approach', originally conceived as a tool for analysing famines. Sen (1981) identified four sources of food: production (what one grows), labour (what one works for), trade (what one buys), and transfers (what one is given). Food insecurity occurs when the sum of all food derived from these four sources is inadequate to meet minimum consumption needs at the individual, household or national level.

Each source of 'food entitlement failure' can be counteracted with a social protection response (Devereux 2008). Food production can be boosted with input subsidies, while harvest failure or livestock losses can be compensated with agricultural insurance. Unemployment or underemployment can be addressed, at least temporarily, by public works programmes. Problems of market access to food can be addressed on the demand side (food price stabilisation, price subsidies) or the supply side (grain reserve management). Inadequate access to food can be addressed directly, through transfers of food (school feeding, supplementary feeding), or cash (with conditions or unconditional). While social protection is associated mainly with social transfers, this disaggregation shows that it offers a much larger menu of options. This chapter reviews the evidence on the ten social protection instruments listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Food entitlement failures and social protection responses

Entitlement category	Social protection instruments	Food security objectives
Production	2.1. Input subsidies	• Promote food production
	2.2. Crop and livestock insurance	• Protect against harvest failure or livestock mortality
Labour	2.3. Public works programmes	• Provide temporary employment • Create useful infrastructure • Promote agricultural production
Trade	2.4. Food price stabilisation	• Maintain market access to food
	2.5. Food subsidies	• Keep food affordable for the poor
	2.6. Grain reserves	• Ensure adequate market food supplies
Transfers	2.7. School feeding	• Reduce hunger • Promote access to education • Promote local food production
	2.8. Supplementary feeding	• Enhance food consumption
	2.9. Conditional cash transfers	• Reduce hunger or poverty • Promote children's access to education and healthcare
	2.10. Unconditional cash transfers	• Reduce hunger or poverty

2.1 Input subsidies

Many countries have chosen to subsidise agricultural inputs, mainly fertiliser and/or seed, with a view to boosting smallholder crop production. Although poor farmers often face difficulties in accessing inputs, market failure is not usually the reason why governments introduce input subsidies. India

implemented its input subsidy programme in the 1960s, to facilitate the spread of the Green Revolution following the discovery and adoption of new seed varieties. Interest in fertiliser subsidies revived following the global food crisis of 2007/08, which highlighted the importance of boosting agricultural production. Whether or not this is a good option depends on the country context and on design and implementation, which can make a big difference to its success. Yet fertiliser subsidies remain controversial: some analysts point to their high cost, limited effectiveness and potential to undermine the development of private markets, while others maintain that they constitute the only instrument to boost agricultural production, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.[4] We review three case studies, from Malawi, India and West Bengal.

Box 3. Malawi: Farm Input Subsidy Programme

Maize is the dominant food staple in Malawi while tobacco, sugar and coffee are the main cash crops. Malawi faces severe land pressure – smallholdings average less than one hectare – which contributes to high levels of food insecurity and hunger and makes access to inputs vital for household food security. In the late 1990s the government implemented the Starter Pack programme, with donor support, which distributed free seed and fertiliser packages to all 2.8 million smallholder families in Malawi, boosting maize production by 100-150 kg per household, reducing the annual food gap and helping to stabilise food prices across seasons (Levy, 2005).

Starter Packs were phased out after 2001, but in 2005 the government launched the Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP), with the aim of ensuring that vulnerable smallholders gain access to fertiliser and improved hybrid seed, to enhance agricultural productivity and ensure household food security. The FISP was initially funded from Malawi Social Action Fund resources, but is now an important component of the national budget. In 2011/12 the government allocated US$ 116 million to procure 140,000 metric tons of fertilisers to distribute to 1.4 million farm families. Farmers paid 28-30% of the full fertiliser cost, the rest being subsidised. The following findings emerge from extensive research on this programme.[5]

- Evidence points to increases in maize production attributable to fertiliser subsidy, though some of the increase is undoubtedly due to favourable rains since 2005.
- The programme is capable of generating a benefit-cost ratio of 0.76 if only “first round” immediate impacts are taken into account – below the break-even point of 1.0. But the ratio is likely to turn positive, rising to 1.36 if ‘second round’ growth effects are taken into account.[6]
- The programme is very expensive, and its cost is increasing – from US$ 91 million in 2006/07 to US$ 116 million in 2011/12 – raising concerns about its fiscal sustainability and possible crowding out of other investments in food security for poor and vulnerable Malawians.
- Targeting has been imperfect. During 2006-7 subsidised fertiliser is estimated to have crowded out (displaced) 30-40% of commercial purchases rather than boosting total purchases, which could have been avoided if the programme were strictly targeted to poorer farmers.
- Fertiliser subsidy impacts are highly vulnerable to factors outside the control of the government, including especially weather and the behaviour of international fertiliser and maize prices.

A recent assessment of the gendered impacts of the FISP found that male-headed households are more likely to receive fertiliser and seed coupons even though female-headed households are

[4] For a good review of this debate, see Minot and Benson (2009).

[5] Findings reported in this section are drawn from Minot and Benson (2009) and Dorward *et al.* (2008).

[6] The ‘first round’ effect is the immediate benefit to farmers by way of in-kind income transfer, to the extent that fertiliser is provided at below market cost. But since fertiliser application leads to higher production over time, this is considered as the ‘second round’ productivity impact.

generally poorer, and that farm plots controlled by women are less likely to have either subsidised or commercial fertiliser applied to them. However, no evidence of intra-household bias was found in the use of subsidised fertilisers between plots controlled by female and male household members, implying that subsidies result in improved access to inputs for women farmers (Chirwa *et al.*, 2011).

Box 4. India: national fertiliser subsidy programme

Among various policy instruments used by the Government of India to boost farm production, input subsidies have dominated since the early 1960s. Subsidies on fertiliser, electricity and irrigation water rose from 15% of the government budget in the early 1980s to 25% by the mid-2000s, with fertiliser accounting for 40% of total input subsidy costs in 2008/09. The implicit income transfer to farmers from the fertiliser subsidy (comprising the difference between the subsidised and market price) ranged from 40-75% of the actual cost to the government.

- Studies confirm that input subsidies contributed to rapid expansion of food production in the early years of Green Revolution, contributing significantly to accomplishing national-level food security and enhancing the ability of the government to deal effectively with crop failures, including the massive drought of 1987/88 (Rao *et al.*, 1988). Input subsidies have been instrumental in accomplishing India's goal of national self-sufficiency in staple cereals, rice and wheat.
- Rapid growth in agricultural production in the initial years of the Green Revolution (1968-1990) has slowed since the mid-1990s, apparently due to lack of investment in physical infrastructure, though the fertiliser subsidy has continued.
- The effective rate of fertiliser subsidy increased from 41% of fertiliser production costs in 2003/04 to 67% in 2009/10, mainly because the nominal price was kept unchanged despite inflation. Politically, farmers constitute a significant lobby, accounting for nearly half of India's population.
- More money is now being spent on the fertiliser subsidy than on education, in a country where school enrolment rates are still well below those in countries with comparable per capita incomes.
- While the geographical concentration of benefits of the fertiliser subsidy has persisted, there has been a reduction in inter-state disparity in fertiliser use, though it remains high.[7]
- Questions were raised in the early years about inter-farm equity impacts (Subbarao, 1986), but recent research has shown that the fertiliser subsidy is equitably distributed among farm sizes, with small and marginal farmers accounting for a larger share of the subsidy than their share in cultivated area (Sharma and Thakur, 2010).
- The Working Group for India's 11th Five Year Plan concluded that input subsidies have resulted in their over-utilisation, leading to soil degradation, groundwater depletion and environmental harm, all of which have reduced the effectiveness of inputs over time (Planning Commission, 2006).

Box 5. West Bengal: input kit programme

The Government of West Bengal state implemented an "input kit" programme from 1982 to 1995. A study based on three rounds of panel data found that distribution of input kits generated impressive increases in farm productivity (17% in 1982-85, 16% in 1986-90, 8% in 1991-95) and accounted for

[7] For an analysis of the inter-state disparity until the 1980s, see Subbarao (1985). For a recent analysis of trends in the fertilizer subsidy programme, see Sharma and Thakur (2010).

two-thirds of a rising annual growth in food production, which stood at 1.7% in the 1970s but reached 4.6% in the 1990s (Bardhan and Mookherjee, 2011). These benefits were uniform across all farm sizes and were accompanied by increases in employment and incomes of farm workers. Importantly, the input kit programme was introduced in a context of significant institutional reforms, including land redistribution and tenancy registration that protected sharecroppers against eviction and regulated the crop share they could retain. Larger landholdings and tenure security increased the impact of the high yielding varieties which were included in the input kits. Taken together, these interventions contributed to the transformation of West Bengal's agriculture.

The three programmes reviewed here have several important implications. Input subsidies generally have positive impacts on agricultural production and farmers' incomes, reducing rural poverty and enhancing household and national food security. Subsidies can be beneficial to women farmers, whose access to commercially purchased inputs is often constrained. However, national-scale input subsidy programmes are extremely expensive and inefficient if generalised, and difficult to target at poor smallholders without large leakages to better-off farmers. They can result in negative secondary impacts on trade, markets and the environment. Once introduced, input subsidy policies are politically difficult to modify or abolish. Countries planning to implement input subsidy programmes need to carefully assess potential benefits against both immediate and longer term costs. Such an analysis needs to take into account interactions between fertiliser use and projected behaviour of fertiliser and crop prices, possible challenges posed by climate change and likely outcomes under bad weather conditions. Where input subsidies are proposed as a social protection response, policymakers may be advised to assess other alternatives, such as a targeted cash transfer equivalent to the subsidy, delivered immediately prior to the planting season.[8]

2.2 Crop and livestock insurance

Farmers who depend on a single rainy season for their food and income are highly vulnerable to drought, as are pastoralists whose livestock depend on scarce water and grazing in arid areas. The potentially devastating impacts of shocks on food security for farmers and pastoralists provide a powerful rationale for social protection – not for emergency relief, which is an uncertain and unreliable *ex post* response, but for *ex ante* mechanisms such as agricultural insurance. Unfortunately, experiences with publicly provided farm-level crop insurance in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s were disappointing failures (Hazell *et al.*, 1986). The main problem was familiar from the literature on insurance markets – imperfect information. Insurers could not distinguish between legitimate claims for payouts and those arising from 'moral hazard' (e.g. crop losses caused by farmer inaction in response to shocks). Also, 'adverse selection' (high-risk individuals being most likely to purchase insurance) forces insurers to raise premiums, which discourages low-risk individuals and can make insurance markets impossible to sustain. Nonetheless, given the malign effects of uninsured risk, interventions that cushion vulnerable farmers and pastoralists against the adverse consequences of shocks are urgently needed. Here we highlight two innovative approaches.

'Index-based weather insurance' links payouts to a local rainfall index that is closely correlated with local crop yields.[9] When the index falls below a certain level, farmers automatically receive a payment – no direct estimation of actual or potential yield losses is required, and 'moral hazard' behaviour is avoided. 'Willingness-to-pay' studies confirm that both farmers and pastoralists have considerable interest in these insurance products (Vargas-Hill *et al.*, 2011; Chantarat *et al.*, 2009). However, when opportunities are given to purchase index insurance, take-up is disappointingly low (Giné *et al.*, 2008; Giné and Yang, 2009).

[8] An example is Mexico's Procampo programme – a cash transfer given to all smallholders just prior to the planting season, which has shown very high positive returns (de Janvry *et al.*, 2008).

[9] In principle, a similar indexed insurance could also be offered to fisherfolk, based on variations in fish harvests, but no evidence of such schemes could be found.

Box 6. Kenya: index-based livestock insurance

Hundreds of pastoralists who participated in an 'index-based livestock insurance' pilot project in northern Kenya received cash payouts during the 2011 Horn of Africa drought, which were triggered when satellite images suggested that grazing conditions were so poor that 15% of livestock were likely to die. Payouts were not related to actual livestock deaths reported by each client; instead, projected livestock losses above 15% were covered, so the scheme provided only partial compensation – if 20% mortality was predicted the client received enough cash to replace 5% of his herd, or one-quarter of animals lost. Premiums were discounted to encourage uptake by poorer pastoralists. Although its commercial viability is uncertain, since market-related premiums are likely to be unaffordable for most pastoralists in the Horn of Africa, index-based livestock insurance has potential as a subsidised social protection intervention, providing some security at a time when climate change is making a highly risky livelihood even more challenging and unpredictable (ILRI, 2011).

What are the implications for social protection? First, in contexts of high poverty, high risk and high premiums, it would be naïve to assume that private insurance markets can supplant publicly provided social protection in the near future. Second, there is an important role for the public sector in nurturing these nascent insurance markets which, as Giné (2009) notes, are limited by poor understanding of how insurance products work, distrust of insurance firms, and high transactions costs. Third, Alderman and Haque (2006) note that climatic shocks impose strains on developing country finances because they increase the need for social protection outlays while reducing fiscal resources, which suggests that governments could purchase index insurance as a means of paying for social protection interventions.

2.3 Public works programmes

As a classic social protection instrument in low- and middle-income countries, public works have a long history. In India, food-for-work began during the pre-Independence period, expanded to cover the whole country during the 1950s, and more recently evolved into the innovative Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. Food- and cash-for-work in Bangladesh have been instrumental in improving rural roads, which now connect even remote villages to Dhaka. In Ethiopia, the Productive Safety Net Programme has strengthened household resilience against recurrent drought-induced food insecurity. These three case studies are reviewed in this section.[10]

The popularity of public works programmes with policy-makers can be explained by several distinctive features. First, because of the work requirement and low wages offered – often in food rather than cash – public works are self-targeting and avoid 'dependency on handouts'. Second, well-designed public works projects can create useful physical infrastructure while simultaneously transferring food or cash to poor people. Third, agriculture-related public works activities, such as hillside terracing or soil and water conservation, can improve farm yields, generating sustainable benefits for household food security.

However, public works have been heavily criticised, and they remain controversial. Common criticisms include the following:

- *The energy expended performing manual labour reduces the net nutritional impact of the food or cash wages.* One evaluation in Niger recorded lower body mass index (BMI) scores for public works participants than for non-participating adults in the same household (Webb, 1995). On the other hand, in Maharashtra's Employment Guarantee Scheme (MEGS), where 40% of

[10] For a recent review of evidence on public works programmes across the world, see Subbarao *et al.* (2012, forthcoming).

participants were women, evidence showed improved health and nutritional status of participating women and their children (Dandekar, 1983).

- *The work requirement excludes many highly vulnerable individuals and households, notably older persons, persons with disability, the chronically ill and pregnant women.* In response, programmes such as Ethiopia's PSNP and Rwanda's Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP) deliver unconditional cash or food transfers to poor labour-constrained households, complementing public works for poor households with members who can work.

- *Women are disproportionately represented among the poor and food insecure, but are excluded from public works by the heavy manual labour involved and their time constraints.* In fact, gender considerations have been acknowledged in several programmes by introducing gender quotas (in Rwanda's VUP, women account for 70% of public works participants, for instance), by classifying work as 'light' or 'heavy' and allocating 'light' tasks to women, and by allowing women to work shorter hours to fulfil their domestic and other responsibilities (Devereux and Solomon, 2006).

- *Assets created by public works that are not maintained often deteriorate after the project ends.* The long-term economic returns to public works assets, whether they are pro-poor and benefit the workers who constructed them, are rarely evaluated, yet non-wage costs typically absorb 40-70% of public works project budgets (Subbarao *et al.*, 1996), "rendering the net cost of a unit transferred through public works significantly higher than alternative measures" (McCord, 2008, p. 167).

Notwithstanding these concerns, which can often be addressed by sensitive design and implementation, public works programmes have generated substantial benefits in terms of poverty alleviation and food security, as the evidence from Bangladesh and Ethiopia (below) confirms.

Box 7. Bangladesh: Food for Assets and Rural Maintenance Programmes

The Food for Asset Creation (FFA) programme is one component of Bangladesh's Integrated Food Security programme. FFA pays a daily wage in food (2 kg of wheat) plus cash (20 taka). The Rural Maintenance Programme (RMP) is also a public works programme, but it pays full cash wages. RMP participants maintain 84,000 kilometres of earthen rural roads around their villages across the country. In 2006, about 1.5 million people participated in these two programmes. Annually about US$ 40 million is spent on FFA, which is financed by the Government of Bangladesh, the Asian Development Bank and the World Food Programme. The RMP costs about US$ 16 million per year and is financed by the Government of Bangladesh, the European Union and CIDA. Both programmes have contributed enormously to the construction and maintenance of rural infrastructure, particularly feeder roads that connect remote villages to major highways. Because these roads were built at an elevation, they are not washed out by floods and rains, and the government and donors have used this road network to move food to needy communities during emergencies.

An evaluation of both programmes found that they are well targeted, probably because of the work requirement: 84% of FFA households and 64% of RMP households fell among the poorest 30% of the income distribution. Both men and women work on these projects. Attributable improvements in food consumption vary according to the level of transfer. Households participating in FFA and RMP increased their capita food consumption by 23 and 35 kilocalories per day respectively, for every 1 taka of income transferred (Ahmed *et al.*, 2010b).

Box 8. Ethiopia: Productive Safety Nets Programme

The Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) is one of the largest social protection interventions in Africa, reaching 8 million food insecure Ethiopians in 2011 through two components: public works (temporary employment) for households with labour capacity and 'direct support' (unconditional cash or food transfers) to labour-constrained households. The overarching objective is to reduce Ethiopia's dependency on annual emergency food aid appeals, by building community assets through public works and providing predictable transfers to households over multiple years, thereby facilitating their graduation from food insecurity to food self-reliance. The PSNP has been implemented since 2005 in food insecure districts, defined as districts that had received food aid continuously for the preceding three years. The target group is chronically food insecure households, who are identified through a combination of objective criteria (e.g. households with no means of support), community screening and self-targeting. Although the PSNP is successfully targeting the rural poor, budget constraints mean that not all poor and food insecure households have been reached (Coll-Black *et al.*, 2012).

A recent evaluation uses a generalised propensity score method to examine the impact of the duration of PSNP participation. Matching households with five years of programme participation to those that had participated for only one year and received much lower levels of transfers, Berhane *et al.* (2012) find that the PSNP improved food security by 1.05 months. When the programme began, participating households reported, on average, 3.6 months of food insecurity each year, so this represents an attributable improvement of 30%. Further, the PSNP protected food security and asset levels in the presence of repeated shocks. Households living in areas that experienced a minimum of two droughts but also received PSNP payments for two or more years were able to maintain their existing levels of food consumption. This provides persuasive evidence that public works in Ethiopia has contributed to protecting and improving household-level food security.

Box 9. India: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme

Following an Act of Parliament guaranteeing the Right to Work, and in fulfilment of election promises made by the ruling party, the Government of India introduced the 100-day guaranteed employment scheme (MGNREGS) in 2006. The programme became a catalyst for the adoption of a human rights approach to other programmes in the domain of social protection. The aim is to provide guaranteed employment, for up to 100 days each year, to anyone who applies for work. This 'demand-driven' programme is in stark contrast with previous approaches of the government (and with standard public works practice elsewhere), which were basically supply-driven. If the local government fails to provide employment on demand, it has to pay a certain share of wages to the applicant as compensation.

Preliminary evaluations point to significant variations in performance (Dutta *et al.*, 2012). Progress is unsatisfactory in very poor eastern states, while the programme is making significant progress in more developed southern states. On average the programme is providing about 40 days of employment but with varying state-wise outcomes: some southern states provide as much as 70 days while in states like Bihar, with high poverty and underemployment, the programme is hardly making any progress. MGNREGS is known for several innovations to improve governance, including social audits (collective monitoring by local people of programme implementation) and IT-based management information systems in some states. It is hoped that the programme will enhance farm productivity and food security, but rigorous impact evaluations have not yet been undertaken.

In conclusion, public works programmes have proved to be an effective instrument to deal with covariate shocks (particularly droughts and floods), enabling consumption smoothing for food

insecure households, but they may not offer an effective and permanent solution to food insecurity. Moreover, public works need to be carefully designed and effectively monitored, or poor design and weak implementation may undermine its impacts. India's employment guarantee scheme has become a global symbol of a human rights based approach; India has also introduced innovations such as social audits that are addressing governance and implementation challenges. The following broad conclusions emerge.

- Public works experience varies a great deal across countries. Well-designed programmes have made a big difference to enhancing the incomes of the rural poor and in creating or maintaining critical rural infrastructure. There have also been many poorly designed and poorly implemented programmes, with significant leakages and corruption.

- Successful public works programmes depend a great deal on careful attention to wage setting, beneficiary and project selection procedures, predictable funding, community participation, credible monitoring and evaluation, and good governance – not always easy to achieve.

- Political economy plays an important role: both for sustaining well-functioning programmes, and for malfunctioning of programmes.

2.4 Food price stabilisation

Rapidly rising and increased volatility of food commodity prices have become one of the most important threats to food security worldwide. To stabilise rising food prices and curb price spikes, the report by the High Level Panel of Experts on this topic recommended a number of initiatives at the international level: building a food security-oriented trading system, precautionary regulation of speculation, international coordination of storage policies, setting up strategic food reserves, curbing demand for biofuels (from dropping mandates to the removal of subsidies and tariffs), and stimulating investment in agriculture through aid and multilateral lending (HLPE, 2011). Implementing and reaping the results of these measures will take time. From a food security stance, prudent governments should take volatile international food prices – with occasional sharp upward spikes – as given.

Table 3. Policy interventions adopted by countries to address the 2007/08 food crisis

	Africa	Asia	LAC	Overall
Countries surveyed	33	26	22	**81**
Interventions to prevent price increases				
Trade policies:				
Reduction of tariffs/custom fees on imports	18	13	12	**43**
Restricted or banned exports	8	13	4	**25**
Domestic market measures:				
Suspension/reduction of VAT/Taxes	14	5	4	**23**
Release public stocks at subsidized prices	13	15	7	**35**
Administered prices	10	6	5	**21**
Interventions to support the poor's access to food Safety net programmes				
Cash transfer	6	8	9	**23**
Food assistance	5	9	5	**15**
Increase disposable income	4	8	4	**16**
Interventions to boost domestic food supply in the short run				
Production support (input subsidies)	12	11	12	**35**
Production safety nets	6	4	5	**15**
Fertilizer/seed programmes	4	2	3	**9**
Market interventions	4	9	2	**15**

Source: Demeke *et al.* (2009); reproduced in HLPE (2011, p. 47).

The standard recommendation given to governments is to let domestic prices adjust. However, since food represents a relatively large share of developing countries' consumption basket, rapidly rising food prices cause inflationary pressure, hurt the living standards of many (frequently the majority) of the poor and the near-poor and, in quite a few instances, trigger widespread social discontent.[11] To avoid such outcomes governments often resort to a variety of interventions designed to put a wedge between international and domestic food prices, such as price controls and general price subsidies, taxes and tariff reductions, export restrictions (from export taxes to outright export bans) and releasing buffer stocks or emergency food reserves (Table 3).

Governments resort to these 'second best' policies because in many countries social safety nets are non-existent or too small in scale. A thorough and detailed discussion of policies to stabilise domestic food prices and macroeconomic responses can be found in HLPE (2011), FAO (2011a), High Level Task Force on Global Food Security (2011) and, on macro-responses, in IMF (2011).

2.5 Food subsidies

Significant increases in food prices have once again drawn the attention of policy-makers around the world to the potential of food-based instruments such as consumer price subsidies in combating food insecurity. This section reviews two related instruments favoured by governments – generalised food subsidies and targeted food subsidies.

The commonest form of food subsidy is a direct, untargeted subsidy that lowers the price of a staple food for all consumers in a country. Governments adopting this policy are motivated by its several advantages. First, it increases the consumption of food, especially by low-income consumers. Second, it is politically more acceptable than many other social protection programmes. Third it is administratively simpler than instruments such as income transfers or public works. In Egypt, where basic food commodities have been subsidised since the 1980s, studies have shown that the poor consume larger quantities of bread than the well-off.[12] Similarly, del Ninno and Dorosh (2003) found that the provision of wheat as flood relief in Bangladesh increased wheat consumption and total calories consumed by more than an equivalent cash transfer would have done.

However, generalised food subsidies also have many disadvantages. Incidence analysis has shown that their distributional impacts are not good, inasmuch as the non-poor generally benefit more than the poor, while their costs (as a percentage of GDP) have risen so high as to be fiscally unsustainable in some countries, leading to macroeconomic instability. Generalised food subsidies are now widely recognised as inefficient instruments for helping the neediest individuals in a society; they encourage waste and spawn corruption, even if they are simpler to administer. Notwithstanding their high cost and poor performance, eliminating or downsizing them have proved difficult. Following a fivefold increase in the price of bread in Egypt that led to food riots in 2008, the government responded with new bread subsidies that cost $2.5 billion annually. Several other North African and Middle Eastern countries continue to rely on generalised food subsidies, while making only limited use of targeted instruments such as cash transfers. However, Tunisia substantially reduced its costs and improved targeting outcomes by subsidising commodities that are disproportionately consumed by the poor, such as smaller cartons of milk, thereby introducing an element of self-selection to a universal subsidy programme (Alderman and Lindert , 1998).

Though general price subsidies should not be used on a permanent basis, they may be an adequate and appropriate temporary intervention in the face of price volatility. However, an important question remains: do targeted subsidies fare better than generalised subsidies? Targeted subsidies mean that

[11] For an overview, see Lustig (2008).

[12] The International Food Policy Research Institute has conducted sustained research on food subsidy policies in several countries; see volumes edited by Pinstrup-Andersen (1988), and Breisinger *et al.* (2010). This section draws on this research.

governments subsidise food prices for certain households, targeted either by income level or by category. In other words, a dual-price policy is adopted: non-targeted individuals buy food at market prices, while eligible households have access to cheaper food. One modality involves governments procuring grain from local farmers at guaranteed minimum support prices, and supplying this grain to low-income consumers at below market prices. Apart from helping the poor, governments implement this policy of market purchases and releases in order to keep food prices within a range, to enable price stabilisation of important food staples. Several South and East Asian countries have adopted this policy instrument; much research has focused on the experiences of India, Bangladesh and Indonesia.[13]

In India and Bangladesh, domestic procurement and public distribution, coupled with political commitment to advance foodgrain production, have played important roles in price stabilisation and addressing chronic food insecurity, and in building stocks to deal with emergency situations created by periodic droughts and floods. Since the mid-1990s however, government procurement policies have led to expensive stockpiling in India, while costs of public distribution have escalated with heavy parastatal involvement (see below). In Bangladesh, a greater role was given to the private sector in trade, with government taking only a limited role that kept the scale of public interventions relatively small (del Ninno *et al.*, 2007).

India's Public Distribution System (PDS) has been in operation for over five decades. Though the name has changed from time to time, its essential features remain the same: the parastatal Food Corporation of India (FCI) procures foodgrains from farmers at guaranteed Minimum Support Prices, and households below the poverty line are given ration cards to access subsidised foodgrains through a network of 'fair price' shops. The PDS has been subjected to sustained research, documenting its main shortcomings: the inefficiency of the FCI, leakages and corruption, and mis-targeting of beneficiaries because income-based thresholds are impossible to monitor as nearly 70% of the population works in agriculture and the informal sector. Radhakrishna and Subbarao (1997) showed that the cost of getting grain to recipients was nearly 50% higher than its value to the consumer. When the costs of mis-targeting were added, it cost the government nearly six rupees to transfer one rupee worth of income to households. Pervasive exclusion errors were reflected in a study that revealed that the poorest tribal population in the state of Orissa have been poorly reached by the PDS (Dev *et al.*, 2007). Overall costs of food subsidies have increased sharply in India, from Rs.200 billion in 1997 to Rs.800 billion in 2011, while public investment in agriculture, research and development has stagnated, raising concerns that subsidies are crowding out critical investments in agriculture. The so-called 'Right to Food Bill' of 2011 will, if promulgated, expand access to subsidised grain through the PDS from 180 million households to over 800 million individuals, disburse 30% of India's total grain output at low prices and raise government spending on food subsidies from US$ 12 billion or 1% of GDP to 2-3% of GDP.

Indonesia avoided getting involved in direct distribution of food to households. Instead, it has used the open market and is among the few countries that have been successful in stabilising food prices through procurement and sales by its logistics agency, BULOG. Indonesia abandoned its use of open market sales as a means to stabilise prices in the wake of the 1997 devaluation, because subsidising rice at well below market prices proved fiscally unsustainable, and encouraged smuggling and re-export (Alderman, 2002). Indonesia replaced the food market intervention regime by a well-designed and well-targeted quota of subsidised rice to "poor villages", using geographical targeting based on certain criteria, and to poor households within villages using a simple formula combining a few proxy indicators of poverty.

[13] Countries that adopted targeted food subsidies include Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka.

Several lessons can be drawn from this review of experiences with food price subsidies.

- Governments are under immense pressure to provide food security to poorest citizens, and food subsidies seem to be an attractive option. There is now broad consensus that consumer subsidies of staple food should be targeted to provide income support to the poorest groups, replacing generalised food subsidies which are highly expensive and grossly inefficient.
- To ensure that subsidies reach the poorest groups, there is a need to explore alternative and cost-effective approaches to targeting, including self-targeting or geographical targeting. Despite good intentions, current targeted programmes suffer from serious exclusion and inclusion errors.
- The concern to reach out to the poorest groups reflects a recognition of the right to food for all everywhere, and to prevent violation of this right for some people. Nonetheless, implementation logistics and cost implications of food subsidies need to be carefully thought through, to avoid crowding out other investments also critical to the wellbeing of the poor.

2.6 Grain reserves

Grain reserve management was a major component of food security policies in the 1960 and 1970s, a period when governments intervened heavily in agricultural production and marketing to ensure national and household food security. As discussed above, governments subsidised inputs to boost food production, and they subsidised food prices to improve access to food for low-income consumers. Many also maintained grain reserves or buffer stocks, as an insurance against shocks or seasonal fluctuations in food supplies and prices. Grain reserves are extensively reviewed in the HLPE report on price volatility (HLPE, 2011); accordingly we discuss them only briefly here, through a social protection lens.

Strategic grain reserves are typically managed by parastatal agencies. Their mandate is to protect food security by defending a 'price band' for staple cereals – a floor price for producers and a ceiling price for consumers – which they do by buying from farmers at a gazetted price, and managing market supplies to prevent excessive price rises. After the annual harvest, the parastatal either purchases surplus produce from local farmers or imports food and stores it in national cereal banks. Later in the year, when on-farm granaries are depleted and market prices start rising, the parastatal releases some of this stock onto the market at cost price, to stabilise supplies and dampen price rises. In bad (e.g. drought) years, the government might distribute this grain as food aid. In principle, grain reserves are a 'win-win-win-win' – a win for farmers who know they can sell their output at a guaranteed price; a win for consumers who are no longer exposed to damaging price spikes; and a win-win for governments because (a) the prices set for producers and consumers are such that the reserve should, unlike food subsidies, operate at little cost to the state; and (b) if an emergency response is needed to a shock, the government has physical stocks it can distribute immediately.

Unfortunately, by the 1980s, grain reserves were proving problematic. The producer benefits of grain reserve management were captured by better-off farmers at the expense of the net food consuming rural poor (Jayne *et al.*, 2006). Parastatal agencies were criticised for acting as monopoly buyers and sellers of grain, and manipulating food prices by intervening in the market, which was considered inefficient and expensive as well as preventing the emergence of a competitive private grain sector. In the 1980s and 1990s, most agricultural parastatals were commercialised or closed, grain reserves were scaled down and market-oriented solutions to food insecurity were advised. These policy reforms were often resisted by governments, but were enforced by the international financial institutions through conditions imposed on structural adjustment loans. One consequence was that these reforms were not seen as credible by traders and farmers, resulting in the partial withdrawal of the state coinciding with the unwillingness of market-based actors to take its place (Jayne *et al.*, 2006). In low-income contexts with weak infrastructure, the transactions costs of trading in deep rural

areas were often too high, and demand signals from poor consumers were too weak, to attract traders. Consequently, when governments finally withdrew, a vacuum was left which traders did not fill, and the rural poor were left more vulnerable than before, at least for a transitional period. State failures in food security were replaced with market failures. Sometimes, as in the case of Malawi, the consequences were tragic (see Box 10).

Box 10. Malawi: Strategic Grain Reserve management

A parastatal agency, the Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC), operated a Strategic Grain Reserve (SGR) in Malawi for decades. In the late 1990s, management of the SGR was contracted out to the National Food Reserve Agency (NFRA), which was mandated to ensure national food security but also to operate on a cost-recovery basis. The NFRA took a commercial loan to buy maize in 1999. Following two bumper harvests, the SGR was fully stocked in early 2001, with 180,000 tons of maize, and the International Monetary Fund advised the Government of Malawi to sell off this stock, which was starting to rot. To reduce SGR operating costs and repay the NFRA loan, the IMF also advised the government to replenish the grain reserve to a much lower level, by purchasing only 60,000 tons of maize after the upcoming harvest. Accordingly, the entire SGR was sold.

However, the 2001 farming season throughout southern Africa was severely affected by a drought that reduced the national maize harvest in Malawi by 32%. This meant that not only was the NFRA unable to buy maize to replenish the SGR – either locally or from neighbouring countries – but the SGR was empty precisely when it was most needed to address a national food crisis. Maize prices rose to five times their seasonal averages, and the government had no capacity to intervene to stabilise supplies. Compounded by a delayed humanitarian response – partly because donors suspected corruption in the grain reserve sale – a famine followed that claimed up to 85,000 lives (Devereux and Tiba, 2007).

The government reacted by over-stocking the grain reserve, which peaked at 266,000 tons in 2003, and was then run down at a loss. These experiences led to a decision to separate the NFRA stock into two – an emergency SGR that was used only for free distribution, and a second stock that is sold by ADMARC to stabilise prices across seasons. However, efficient management of both grain reserves continues to be compromised by the unpredictability of harvests from one year to the next (Ellis, 2010). In 2005 Malawi purchased a call option on South African maize, at one-third the cost of commercially imported maize. This option was successfully invoked to supplement domestic maize supplies after a drought threatened to trigger another food crisis (Alderman and Haque, 2006).

Despite their cost and management challenges, grain reserves continue to be an important food security policy instrument – at least 35 countries released public stocks as a response to the 2007/08 food price spike. “Countries with appropriate stock levels and well-defined rules of release were better able to stabilize their domestic food prices” (HLPE, 2011, p. 67). Innovative mechanisms for reducing costs and improving efficiency are being piloted, such as splitting the reserve between a physical stock and a financial fund, or using futures markets to source food supplies promptly through hedging arrangements (Byerlee *et al.*, 2006). Nonetheless, while there may be a case for a strategic reserve to ensure that emergency food supplies are readily available, given their poor track record national-level grain reserves should be used to complement rather than substitute for more effective social protection interventions.

2.7 School feeding

School feeding can take several forms: an in-school prepared meal such as porridge served as breakfast at the start of the school day, a mid-morning snack such as a micro-nutrient fortified biscuit, or a take-home ration (THR) of grains, pulses and cooking-oil. School feeding programmes are found

across the world; the World Food Programme alone was responsible for interventions in 62 countries in 2010 (WFP 2012b). School feeding programmes have dual objectives: reducing hunger and improving food security, particularly for children; and increasing human capital accumulation through providing incentives for children, particularly girls, to attend school and by providing food which helps children to concentrate and learn.[14] Incentivising parents by reducing opportunity costs of schooling is important for poor households, where children often provide labour from a young age – school feeding can help to reduce the incidence of child labour (Ravallion and Wodon, 2000)

Drawing generalised conclusions on the food security impacts of school feeding is tricky because of marked variations across programmes in the quantity and quality of food provided, and whether the food is fortified with micronutrients. Mindful of this, well-designed studies show that school feeding does increase food consumption of learners. A school snack programme in the Philippines increased calorie consumption of primary school-age children by about 300 kcal/child/day (Jacoby, 2002). Importantly, parents did not reduce the amount of food served to children at home, a finding also replicated in other countries such as Bangladesh (Ahmed, 2004). A number of studies have also found powerful impacts on micronutrient status. Analysing data collected as part of cluster randomised control trial, Adelman *et al.* (2012) find that adolescent girls aged 10-13 years in Ugandan schools experienced significant declines in mild anaemia prevalence relative to a control group. This finding is important given that iron deficiency in adolescent girls is a major nutrition problem in developing countries, and the Ugandan school feeding programme is one case of an intervention that successfully addresses this. Further, the take-home ration component of this trial showed a decline in mild anaemia prevalence of adult women aged 18 and older living in households that received these rations. Ahmed (2004) and Kazianga *et al.* (2008) also report positive spill-over effects to other household members, most notably younger siblings.

'Home grown school feeding' (HGSF) is an approach that sources food for school feeding locally, rather than using imported food or food aid. HGSF links social protection directly to domestic agricultural production, purchasing from local farmers – ideally but not always poor smallholders – while delivering locally preferred food to learners (Sumberg and Sabates-Wheeler, 2011). Brazil's experience, which dates back to the mid-1950s, is instructive. Initially, food was prepared and provided centrally, thus allowing for economies of scale in provision and monitoring of nutritional content. However, difficulties with distribution meant that food either did not reach remote rural localities or was spoilt by the time it arrived. Reforms in the mid-1990s led to the decentralisation of procurement, both improving delivery and stimulating local production. Crucially, these reforms included institutional structures to prevent corruption, ensure public funds were being used appropriately and input from both local families and nutritionists to ensure that the meals provided were both nutritious and consistent with local tastes (Otsuki and Arce, 2007).

These benefits are partly offset by the costs of delivering school meals, and concerns about targeting. Bundy *et al.* (2009) estimate that median administrative costs for food programmes are 21% compared to 9% for cash transfers. There are also targeting issues with school feeding. Most programmes rely on geographic targeting, operating in localities where poverty or food insecurity is most prevalent. While the costs of identifying such localities are relatively low, this implies that children in food insecure households residing outside school feeding areas are excluded, while children from food secure households that attend schools where school feeding is provided are included. School feeding will not reach children who have been withdrawn or dropped out from school, who are typically children from especially food insecure households. It is not cost-effective to target school feeding at the individual student level and, even if it were, such an approach would risk stigmatising those individuals in a highly undesirable way.

[14] For evidence on the impact of school feeding programmes on schooling-related outcomes, see Grantham-McGregor *et al.* (1998), Adelman *et al.* (2008), Bundy *et al.* (2009), Alderman *et al.* (2012).

Set against these concerns are two other considerations. First, school feeding programmes are usually designed to meet multiple objectives – food security, education, gender equity, agricultural growth – and their higher costs might well be justified in this context, especially in disadvantaged communities, where undernourishment and low school enrolment and attendance, especially of girls, are common problems (Kristjansson *et al.,* 2009). Second, existing school feeding programmes may serve as good platforms for scaling up social protection in response to shocks such as drought, because the necessary infrastructure for delivery is already in place. Also, the assurance of free meals during a food crisis can contribute to keeping children in school, who might otherwise be withdrawn to save costs or to look for work.

School feeding programmes cannot be the only social protection instrument for addressing hunger and food insecurity, but they can be a valuable component of a broader approach, especially where there are target populations such as adolescent girls who are hard to reach with other interventions. They have an additional value where they can be scaled up in response to shocks. Given their relatively high delivery costs, there are considerable gains to be made by experimenting with different delivery modalities to see how these affect their schooling and food security benefits.

2.8 Supplementary feeding

Supplementary feeding is a form of consumption or in-kind transfer that provides food rations to selected individuals, including the especially vulnerable group of young (preferably still breast-fed) children from 6 months until their second birthday, as well as pregnant and lactating women. Food security for these vulnerable groups does not follow automatically from household food security, given their special needs as well as intra-household constraints in paying particular attention to these needs. In the case of children, it concerns the under-focused significance of the adequacy of foods they are given, forms and frequency of feeding, and behaviour of caretakers to prevent infections through unclean water and lack of environmental and personal hygiene – all contributing to malnutrition and related diseases. Besides nutritious food being a human right of children (United Nations, 1989), evidence from a randomised intervention in Guatemala showed that supplementary feeding improved cognitive skills, schooling and adult economic productivity, showing how social transfers (here, as an in-kind transfer provided to young children) can also be long-term economic investments (Hoddinott *et al.*, 2008; Maluccio *et al.*, 2009).

Supplementary feeding can take various forms: often it means a ‘food supplement’ or nutritious dry-ration take-home package, or it can mean a meal eaten on the spot of delivery, say a health care facility or soup kitchen. ‘Nutrition supplements’ normally imply administering specific micronutrients (vitamins or minerals) to prevent the less observable development of deficiency diseases, also called ‘hidden hunger’, with particular attention paid to Vitamin A, iron and zinc. These are often provided as blanket distributions, but should where possible be based on routine assessment of needs. The most common strategies for ensuring adequate micronutrient intakes are dietary diversity, micronutrient supplementation and food fortification. There are different views and emphases among experts regarding these (Latham, 2010; West *et al.*, 2010). Guidelines for supplementary and complementary feeding are provided in the ‘Global Strategy for Infants and Young Child Feeding’ (WHO, 2003) and many subsequent national versions.

For women and especially the ‘girl child’, pregnancies and the period prior to potential early pregnancy are critical for what they ought to eat to ensure adequate nutrition for themselves and the developing foetus in the womb, for a healthy pregnancy and delivery of healthy babies, and for the period of breastfeeding of the baby – exclusively for 6 months and preferably beyond (together with

complementary feeding). Attention to women's right to food and nutrition security, including supplements of iron and folic acid, can thus be seen as 'intergenerational social protection'.[15]

The impact of food supplementation on children's height and weight merits careful attention. Studies undertaken in Ghana (Adu-Afarwuah *et al.*, 2007), Guatemala (Schroeder *et al.*, 1995), Haiti (Ruel *et al.*, 2008) and Jamaica (Sguassero *et al.*, 2005) show positive impacts on height gain, while others in Ecuador (Lutter *et al.*, 2008) and Malawi (Lin *et al.*, 2008) find evidence of gains in weight but not height.[16] But there is also a need to focus on the actual forms of feeding programmes, which can vary greatly. In line with human rights and the right to adequate food thinking as well as with concerns regarding sustainability, it is highly desirable to link transfers to interventions that can facilitate behavioural changes that will empower mothers and families to ensure adequate child feeding prepared by themselves from local resources at home where appropriate. This approach has been taken in the context of conditional cash transfers in Mexico where the resource transfer (cash) is accompanied by nutrition education for caregivers (Behrman and Hoddinott, 2005). In contrast, a qualitative study of the experiences and perceptions of mothers receiving nutrition supplementation at primary health care facilities in the Cape Town area, showed that no nutrition education accompanied the programme and that health personnel were not concerned about the mothers' home situation, despite the South African Department of Health's explicit prescriptions for nutrition education to accompany nutrition supplementation delivery (Andresen *et al.*, 2009).

While not all community- or family-based approaches may as yet show evidence in improvements by classical individual nutritional status measurements, such approaches to child feeding operationalise the human rights principles of participation, transparency and empowerment, and can easily build in accountability as part of the participatory mechanisms. They will also facilitate early 'graduation' from the training programmes, as mothers or other caretakers will not need to return with subsequent new malnourished siblings. To strengthen local solutions and empowerment there has in recent years been a trend towards more systematic 'training of trainers' (TOT) to mobilise mothers and 'mothers-to-mothers' groups in preparing home-based infant and young child meals and feeding schedules. Examples include the Positive Deviance/Hearth Approach (CORE Group, 2003), with experience from Kenya (Plan International 2006); Mothers' Support Groups, with experiences from Ethiopia (Viadro *et al.*, 2008) and Uganda (Uganda Ministry of Health (n.d.)); Reaching the under-2s in Uttar Pradesh, India (starting from the antenatal period) (Kushwaha, 2010); and Feeding the Future nutrition education, with experience from Laos (WFP, 2012a).

A final note: supplementary feeding addresses mild-to-moderate cases of malnutrition, while serious cases of clinical malnutrition need therapeutic dietary treatment combined with life-saving rehydration. In therapeutic feeding excellent results in terms of rapid recovery of severely malnourished children have been obtained with 'Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Foods' (RUTF) – solid food mixes needing no cooking and usually based on groundnut paste as the main protein ingredient, besides a cereal basis with added vitamins and minerals. Such products should definitely be continued in clinical therapeutic situations, although rehabilitated children may continue to be at risk for renewed malnutrition (UNICEF, 2009). A special worry among many in the nutrition community is that some medical advocates and organisations tend to instil a perception that what is good for therapy must also be good for prevention. The danger of this is that a possible dependence on such products may interfere with breastfeeding and undermine sustainable home-based solutions (as discussed for example by Latham *et al.*, 2011; IBFAN, 2012). A related concern is the likely increasing commercialisation of

[15] For the promotion and protection of exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months and beyond, the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes (WHO 1981) – and subsequent World Health Assembly resolutions – is the major source of information, guidance and requests to member states, the private sector and individuals, comprising also provisions about the marketing and labeling of commercial complementary foods.

[16] Other evaluations – in Indonesia (Sguassero *et al.*, 2005) and in Bangladesh (Begum *et al.*, 2006) – found little or no evidence of growth impacts of food supplementation. However, these programmes suffered serious shortcoming in design and implementation.

these products at prices that poor families cannot afford, and the risk of 'medicalising' young children's need for special foods, when their food should be a natural although special part of a family's daily diet. A potential compromise is indicated by the growing examples of locally prepared Ready-to Use Food Supplements (RUFS) from local resources.

2.9 Conditional cash transfers

Following early successes in Bangladesh, Brazil and Mexico, conditional cash transfer programmes (CCTs) have spread across the world, notably in Latin America but also in South and East Asia.[17] CCTs have three defining characteristics: (1) they target poor regions and identify poor households within those regions that will receive benefits; (2) they provide cash (and sometimes in-kind transfers such as nutritional supplements) usually to the mother or primary caregiver; (3) in order to receive these transfers, recipients must commit to undertaking certain actions. The most common condition is enrolling children in school and maintaining adequate attendance levels. In some countries, attendance at pre- and postnatal health-care appointments, and ensuring that pre-school children receive vaccinations, growth monitoring and regular checkups, are required (Adato and Hoddinott, 2010).

A critical feature of CCTs, therefore, is the attempt to balance two policy objectives: to increase the consumption levels of poor families, and to raise the human capital of poor children. As such, CCTs aim to reduce both short-term food insecurity and the long-term intergenerational transmission of poverty and vulnerability. As Adato and Hoddinott (2010) note, the logic underpinning CCTs is that the primary constraint to school attendance (or health checkups) is the absence of 'demand' for these services. A supply of education and health services exists but these are underutilised, because households cannot afford fees or complementary costs, or children are needed to work rather than study, or parents do not always make choices in the best interest of their children, or there is a tendency within households to discriminate against girls. By providing information on the benefits of these health and education services as well as transfers that compensate for the loss of income from child labour or pay for complementary costs (such as uniforms or transport), CCTs aim to relax the constraints to household investment in the human capital of their children.

Typically, CCTs do not have food security as an explicit objective, but some – such as Mexico's Progresa/ Oportunidades – do list improved nutrition as a goal. However, to the extent that CCTs raise household income, some of this incremental income will be spent on food. The impact on food security, however, depends on how food security is measured and the characteristics of programme participants. For very poor households, increasing the quantity of food consumed is a priority. For these households, a 10% increase in income can improve household food security, as measured by calories available for consumption, by 5%. But once access to calories reaches some threshold level, attention switches to food quality. Household caloric acquisition may continue to rise but at a much slower rate. Instead, households diversify their diet, increasing their consumption of fruits, vegetables and animal products.[18]

Evidence of CCT impacts on food security is available for countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Hoddinott and Wiesmann (2010) examine three CCT programmes, PRAF (Nicaragua), PROGRESA (Mexico) and RPS (Nicaragua), and find that across all beneficiaries, neither PRAF nor RPS had statistically significant effects on caloric acquisition. PROGRESA did have a statistically significant, but small, impact – only 3.6%. Fiszbein and Schady (2009) find similarly small effects, as do Hoddinott and Skoufias (2004). However, for the poorest 30% of the population in all three countries, Hoddinott and Wiesmann find that these CCT programmes significantly raise per capita

[17] Milazzo (2009) provides an annotated bibliography of conditional cash transfer programmes as of late 2009. See also Grosh *et al.* (2008) and Fiszbein and Schady (2009).

[18] Studies documenting this relationship include Subramanian and Deaton (1996), Hoddinott *et al.* (2000), Gibson and Rozelle (2002), and Hoddinott and Wiesmann (2010).

caloric availability, by between 5.8% (Mexico) and 12.7% (Nicaragua). In addition, there are large and statistically significant effects on diet quality. In Mexico and Nicaragua, consumption of fruits and vegetables increase by 12.3% and 52.5% respectively. Large effects are also found in terms of calories obtained from animal products and, in Nicaragua, there are improvements in diet diversity as measured by the number of foods eaten. These impact estimates, obtained from randomised experimental methods, are consistent with beneficiaries' perceptions. When asked what had changed since they began receiving assistance from PROGRESA, 48% of beneficiaries responded that they ate better and 19% that they ate more (Hoddinott and Skoufias 2004). These findings indicate that CCTs can improve both the quantity of calories consumed and the quality of diets.

Making social transfers conditional on behaviour is controversial. Critics point out that conditionality increases the administrative costs and complexity of running cash transfer programmes. One study found that monitoring conditionality represented approximately 18% of administrative costs and 2% of total programme costs (Caldes *et al.*, 2006). Meeting conditions imposes direct costs on participants, which are often borne by mothers who have to accompany children to health clinics or attend community meetings (Molyneux, 2007). Some households may find the conditions too difficult to meet, and either not join (self-exclusion) or be excluded from receiving transfers for non-compliance, compromising the programme's coverage and impact. Finally, if meeting conditions requires access to public services which are simply not available, not only does conditionality fail to change behaviour it also punishes households for something beyond their control.

A rights perspective is, perhaps surprisingly, ambiguous on the question of conditionality. Because the Universal Declaration of Human Rights includes the right to an adequate standard of living (Article 25), some argue that it is morally indefensible to attach any conditions to social transfers targeted at poor people (Freeland, 2007). But children also have a right to education, so enforcing school enrolment and attendance can be a mechanism for overriding parental reluctance in some societies to send (especially) their daughters to school. As with other policies that enforce the rights of children and women or protect them from violence, conditionality provides state legitimation for social change.

Lastly, there is simply insufficient evidence to state confidently that conditionality is effective. One study (de Brauw and Hoddinott, 2011), based on data from Mexico, found that for all age groups who had completed grades 3-8, the unconditioned' group enrolment rate was 5.4 percentage points lower than the 'conditioned' group. The biggest impact was for children who had completed grade 6, that crucial year of transition to secondary school when many drop out: for them, children in the 'unconditioned' group were 18 to 20 percentage points less likely to enrol in school. A well-designed study in Malawi found that impacts on schooling were, on average, similar for both conditional and unconditional transfers but that when transfers were given directly to schoolgirls, school attendance improved significantly only if these transfers were conditional (Baird *et al.*, 2011).

2.10 Unconditional cash transfers

Unconditional cash transfers include government-run social grant programmes for vulnerable groups, as well as small-scale pilot projects usually financed by donor agencies and implemented by NGOs. While conditional cash transfers are common in Latin America, unconditional cash transfers are more popular in Africa, for several reasons. The most persuasive explanation is that social services are generally weaker in sub-Saharan Africa than in Central and South America, and well functioning education and health services are prerequisites for conditions linked to these services to be effective.

The largest cash transfer programmes in Africa are in South Africa, where 3.5% of GDP in 2010/2011 was allocated to social assistance (Black Sash, 2010). The Child Support Grant reaches more than 10 million children, followed by the Older Person's Grant, reaching more than 2 million social pensioners. These programmes are means tested and are well targeted on the poor – over half of households in the poorest two income quintiles, but less than one in ten in the richest quintile, receive the Child

Support Grant. Households in the poorest quintile receive no less than two-thirds of their income from social grants (McEwen *et al.*, 2009, p. 19).

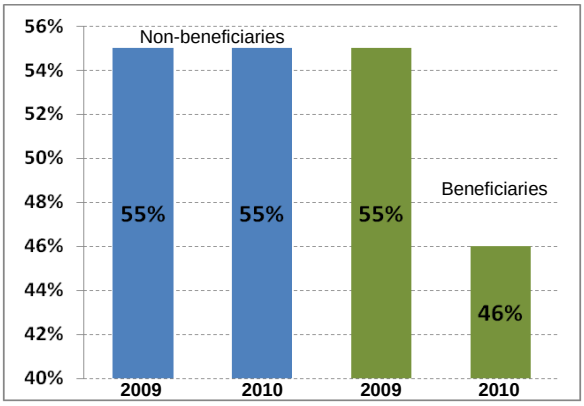
Large-scale cash transfer programmes can have substantial positive impacts on food insecurity and poverty. Cash transfers alone are not expected to reduce the poverty headcount significantly, because their value is usually too low to raise beneficiaries above the poverty line, but they can reduce the 'poverty gap' (the average distance by which the income or consumption of the poor falls below the poverty line). Unconditional cash transfers at national scale can also reduce income inequality, by boosting the amount of income received by the poorest individuals and households. South Africa's seven social grant schemes doubled the share of national income received by the poorest 20% and reduced the Gini coefficient[19] by 3 percentage points, while the Child Support Grant alone has halved the poverty gap (Samson *et al.*, 2004).

Several studies have found a direct impact of unconditional cash transfers on food security and nutrition outcomes.[20] The 'Direct Support' component of the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in Ethiopia and the Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP) in Rwanda were both found to have significant positive impacts on household food security (Gilligan *et al.*, 2008; World Bank 2010). The Kalomo District Pilot Social Cash Transfer Scheme in Zambia significantly improved the diets and nutritional status of beneficiaries – consumption of fats, proteins and vitamins increased, and households living on one meal a day fell from 19% to 13% (MCDSS and GTZ 2006). Children in South Africa whose mothers receive the Child Support Grant are predicted to increase their height-for-age such that they will be 3.5 cm taller as adults (Aguero *et al.*, 2007).

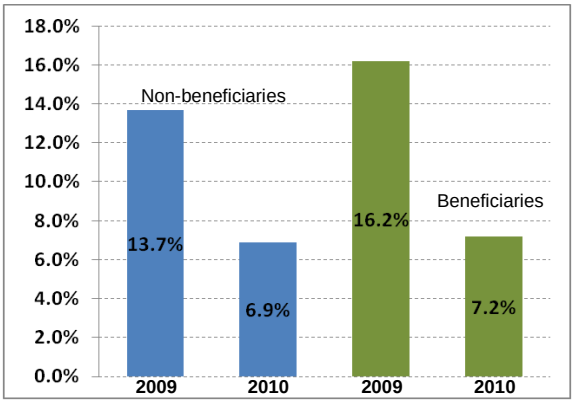
In Malawi, the Mchinji Social Cash Transfer Scheme is a pilot project that has been rigorously evaluated and demonstrates striking effects on child nutrition. The proportion of children in beneficiary households whose growth was stunted[21] fell from 55% to 46% in one year, but remained at 55% in 'control group' households that did not receive transfers, so the programme effect – the reduction in stunting attributable to the cash transfers – was 9 percentage points. The proportion of children who were wasted[22] more than halved over the year, from 16.2% to 7.2% in beneficiary households, but also fell significantly, from 13.7% to 6.9% in non-beneficiary households, leaving an attributable 'difference in differences' of 2.2 percentage points (Miller *et al.*, 2011; see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Impacts of cash transfers on child nutrition in Malawi

(a) Stunting



(b) Wasting



Source: derived from Miller *et al.*, 2011.

[19] The Gini coefficient is an inequality measure that lies between 0 (no inequality: everybody has exactly the same income) and 1 (total inequality: all income accrues to one person).

[20] Good reviews of the impacts of cash transfers can be found in Save the Children (2012) and, from an explicitly human rights perspective, in Künnemann and Leonard (2008).

[21] Stunting (height-for-age) is an indicator of long-term undernutrition.

[22] Wasting (weight-for-height) is an indicator of short-term undernutrition.

Apart from direct consumption effects, cash transfers also stimulate investment in agriculture and other livelihood activities. A social pension paid to over-65s in Bolivia increases consumption by twice the value of the benefit, but only among rural households with land, because part of the increased consumption is due to increased production, especially of dairy products, meat and vegetables (ILO, 2010). Brazil's social pension is also partly invested in seeds and tools for farming. Similar findings were reported from a qualitative assessment of the social pension in Namibia, which also found that the predictability of a regular income improved market access to food, by attracting traders to remote communities and enabling pensioners to buy food on credit (Devereux, 2002).

The direct impact of cash transfers on household food security depends on the size and frequency of the transfers, as well as their purchasing power. Cash is less effective where markets are weak and food prices are high or volatile. There is also some evidence that cash transfers have more direct food security impacts when delivered to women, who tend to spend more on food and other basic needs for children and the family, while men spend more on non-essential consumption items and investment in income generation (Sabates-Wheeler and Kabeer, 2003). There is no evidence that nominating women in male-headed households as recipients of social transfers raises the risk of intra-household conflict, but this is an area where further research is needed in a variety of socio-cultural contexts.

3 SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS FOR FOOD SECURITY

The previous chapter examined the merits and limitations of several social protection instruments that are specifically intended to support household food security. However, social protection instruments should not operate in isolation, but function best as components of a comprehensive system that addresses food insecurity through a combination of social protection and other interventions, with strong linkages to other social sectors (education, health, etc.) and to economic sectors (agriculture, trade policy). This chapter discusses how social protection systems can be constructed that meet the food security needs of different food insecure groups, both working and non-working, at various stages of the life-course. Four approaches are considered: (1) cross-sectoral linkages; (2) vertically integrated programmes; (3) national systems; and (4) conceptual frameworks (the 'social protection floor' and the 'food security floor').

3.1 Cross-sectoral linkages

Social protection plays an important, often vital, role in supporting food insecure people, and well designed, well implemented social protection programmes can contribute to addressing the causes of food insecurity. But social protection cannot 'solve' all the causes of food insecurity and its impact on nutrition on its own. Achieving food security in the short term requires not only household or individual access to adequate food, but also linkages to basic health care services, clean water and sanitation, and appropriate information, education and skills training to ensure that the food will also be utilised effectively in safe and wholesome daily diets for nutritional health and wellbeing. Achieving sustainable food security in the long term requires support to agriculture, employment creation, investment in infrastructure and favourable trade policies, among others. For instance, if food insecurity is related to lack of employment, public works programmes can provide short-term work opportunities – but not sustainable jobs.

The food security impacts of social protection programmes can be strengthened by linking them to complementary interventions. This is the thinking that underpins conditional cash transfer programmes, as discussed earlier. For example, by linking cash transfers to the distribution of nutritional supplements, the Oportunidades programme in Mexico reduced the probability of stunting and actually increased child growth by approximately one-sixth (Behrman and Hoddinott, 2005).

The risk of not linking social protection to sectoral programmes is that social protection will substitute for these programmes by default. This risk is exacerbated when social protection programmes are externally financed, because this reduces the incentive for government to invest either in social protection or in the under-invested sectors that social protection programmes are compensating for. This is one reason why government ownership of social protection programmes is crucial. Another reason is that government accountability follows from government ownership, and accountability is very difficult to introduce into donor-driven programmes or NGO-implemented projects, as is discussed elsewhere. Conversely, failure to invest in services can undermine the effectiveness of social protection programmes that are linked to those services. For instance, if conditional cash transfers or school feeding programmes increase the demand for education without corresponding investments in expanding the provision and maintaining the quality of education services, the impact of the social protection intervention will be compromised (UNICEF, 2012).

The case of Botswana shows how social protection can be delivered by several line ministries, even in the absence of a coordinated national social protection strategy.

Box 11. Botswana: delivering social protection through a multi-sectoral approach

The Government of Botswana implements a number of social protection programmes through several ministries, which together provide comprehensive social assistance to various poor and food insecure groups. These interventions include the following.

- The Ministry of Local Government runs a **public works programme** called 'Ipelegeng' that offers temporary employment, which scales up in drought years. The same Ministry provides grants to '**remote area dwellers**', to develop rural infrastructure and promote income generation and agricultural production.
- The Department of Social Services runs a programme for **destitute persons**, 73% of whom are women, which includes cash and food transfers designed to ensure a nutritionally balanced diet. The Department also runs the state **old age pension** scheme for all citizens over 65 years of age; 60% of social pensioners are female.
- The Ministry of Education runs a comprehensive **school feeding** programme that delivers meals every school day to all primary and secondary learners in government schools.
- The Ministry of Health runs a '**vulnerable group feeding programme**' that distributes food rations through clinics to malnourished children under six years old, and to pregnant and lactating women.

"Only at a later stage do these need to be woven into the framework of a national social protection policy, which then serves to harmonise, rationalise and consolidate the various different schemes that have emerged organically in response to different political and social imperatives. Botswana is currently undertaking that process, and designing a comprehensive social development framework" (EuropeAid, 2012, p. 46).

3.2 Vertically integrated programmes

Instead of single social protection instruments, a more effective approach is to combine several instruments that meet different needs of different groups, or the same groups at different times, thereby exploiting synergies between instruments (Robalino *et al.*, 2012). Integrated social protection programmes often deploy several complementary mechanisms to support household food security. Two examples are the Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction programme in Bangladesh, and the Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme in Rwanda. In both cases, households with different food security needs receive different forms of social protection support, and both pursue pathways to graduation for some categories of households, that reflect a movement from reliance on programme support towards self-reliance.

Box 12. Bangladesh and Rwanda: integrated approaches to social protection for food security

Bangladesh: Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction

'Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction' (CFPR) is a programme implemented by the NGO BRAC to complement the highly successful micro-credit programmes in Bangladesh, with the objective of reaching people who are too poor to access micro-credit. The CFPR pursues a twin-track approach – providing social assistance as well as productive assets to extremely poor households (livelihood protection plus livelihood promotion). Targeted beneficiaries receive a package of support: a 'subsistence allowance' worth about US$ 0.4 a day, free healthcare for two years, and materials for improved housing, latrines and water supply (thereby addressing important non-food aspects of food and nutrition security). These beneficiaries also receive

livelihood assets worth US$ 100-150, either for free or as a soft loan – livestock, agricultural inputs, or non-agricultural assets such as a sewing machine – as well as compulsory training to ensure the assets are used effectively. In its first phase (2002-2006), extreme poverty (<$1/day) fell by 30 percentage points, from 89% to 59%, among participating households, while it fell by 13 percentage points in a control group. In its second phase, CFPR aims to graduate 863,000 households, which would mean that over four million individuals have been lifted out of extreme poverty through this integrated approach (EuropeAid, 2012, p. 55).

Rwanda: Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme

The VUP, Rwanda's flagship social protection programme, "builds on past experiences which show that 'isolated' interventions by sector ministries, donors or NGOs are not sufficient to lift people out of extreme poverty" (Government of Rwanda, 2007, p. i). The VUP has three components. **Direct Support** provides unconditional cash transfers to the poorest rural households who have no labour capacity. An assessment found that the level of transfers was sufficient to contribute to a statistically significant increase in per capita food consumption by Direct Support households (World Bank, 2010). The second component is **Public Works**, which pays cash wages to poor households with labour capacity, who construct or maintain community infrastructure (rural access roads, classrooms), or undertake activities that boost agricultural productivity (terracing, irrigation). Third, the **Ubudehe Credit Scheme** disburses loans to poor individuals, who can also form borrower groups with non-poor individuals to finance micro-enterprises (poultry rearing, carpentry). Every VUP participant receives their cash transfers or loans through a bank account, which they must open with a local financial institution, and which facilitates access to savings and credit services. Through this combination of interventions, the VUP combines social assistance to the most vulnerable groups, livelihood promotion through asset creation and agricultural investments by the 'productive poor', microfinance to the poor and non-poor, as well as financial inclusion for poorest rural households.

3.3 National systems

National social protection strategies often include food security objectives, especially in low-income economies dominated by subsistence-oriented agriculture. A useful distinction can be drawn between 'one-off transfers' of cash or food or inputs, 'regular transfers', and 'integrated schemes' (EuropeAid 2012). One-off transfers are most effective in emergency contexts, or to provide a boost to livelihoods – e.g. providing input packages to farmers, or livestock to pastoralists, after a drought. Regular transfers are increasingly common in low-income countries with large gaps in social security coverage, where governments or development partners introduce discretionary projects that are not institutionalised, but often limited in scale and time-bound. By contrast, integrated schemes are permanent entitlements for all eligible citizens or residents, guaranteed by law so fiscally and politically sustainable, and usually linked to complementary services. Although integrated schemes are preferable, regular schemes or one-off transfers, implemented with external financial and technical support, may be unavoidable, at least for an interim period. This section reveals the power of a systemic approach, drawing on experiences from Brazil, India and sub-Saharan Africa.

3.3.1 Brazil

Following the principles embedded in the human right to adequate food and food sovereignty, food and nutrition security is considered a strategic objective of public policy in Brazil. Recent achievements in reducing food insecurity are strongly linked with civil society organising to create formal channels to participate in designing and implementing social policies. The movement for Ethics in Politics that led to the impeachment of President Collor inspired the creation of 'Citizens Action against Hunger and Poverty and for Life' in 1993, formed by hundreds of civil society organisations, including labour unions, political parties, non-governmental agencies, professional and

entrepreneurial associations. The Citizens Action movement resulted in the creation of more than 5,000 local committees in every Brazilian county and the launch of a national campaign against hunger. The Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA) prepared a Hunger Map to guide public policies, showing that 32 million people were living in extreme poverty. The Citizens Action movement was also instrumental in creating the National Council on Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA) in 1993, an advisory board formed by government officials and civil society organizations responsible for designing policies and guidelines for food and nutrition security.

Explicit programmes to tackle food and nutrition insecurity have been in place at least since the 1950s – for example, the School Meals Programme – but after 1993 they became a political priority. Under a recommendation of CONSEA, the Brazilian Congress passed the National Law on Food and Nutrition Security (LOSAN) in 2006. As pointed out by Rocha (2009), the 'right to food' is now institutionalised as an obligation of the state. This was followed by the creation of the National System on Food and Nutrition Security (SISAN), which is responsible for creating and implementing policies to fulfil the requirements established by LOSAN. SISAN is coordinated by the Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger (MDS) and includes the federal, state, and local governments as well as members of civil society and the private sector. Access to food is the primary objective, but the national policies are also designed to maintain production and distribution of food as fundamental goals for a sustainable strategy on food and nutrition security. Some of the most important developments are described below.

In 2003, Brazil launched the Zero Hunger Programme as part of the National System and Policy for Food and Nutrition Security. Zero Hunger included two main types of interventions: (1) increasing access to food for the low-income population via income transfers, school meals, etc. as well as raising the minimum wage and promoting employment; and (2) strengthening family farms, which comprise the majority of agricultural establishments and are responsible for the bulk of food supply in the domestic market. The Zero Hunger programme was initially placed under a new ministry created to address hunger and food security, the Extraordinary Ministry for Food Security and the Fight Against Hunger. In 2004, however, Zero Hunger and other social programmes were consolidated and the new ministry was transformed into a National Secretariat for MDS. Many Zero Hunger programmes existed for many years, but under Lula's government they were extended or transformed and became more effective. A key feature is the strengthening of the local social councils as significant players in food and nutrition insecurity. The partnership between civil society and government is one of the main contributions of the Brazilian model. Local committees are responsible for monitoring and controlling how public resources are spent in local programmes. By law, local governments must establish a local social council in order to receive funds and they must draw at least half of their members from civil society.

The National School Meal Programme (PNAE) was created in 1955 and is the oldest food programme in Brazil. PNAE is administered by the Ministry of Education, but is implemented by states and municipalities in public and non-profit schools as well as public day-care centres. The main goal is to provide 30% of the child's daily nutritional needs for indigenous settlements and descendants of former slaves (*quilombolas*) and 15% for all other children. In 2010, PNAE benefited more than 45 million children. A distinctive feature of PNAE is the obligation to use at least 30% of resources in acquiring food directly from family farms. An active local social council is the most important component in successful schools meals programmes around the country (Weis *et al.*, 2005).

Decentralisation of Bolsa Familia, Brazil's flagship conditional cash transfer programme, is also an important aspect of Zero Hunger. Municipal agents responsible for registering beneficiaries apply a standardised questionnaire to create the information base for Bolsa Familia. The 'single registry' (Cadastro Único) has generated a broad dataset of the conditions of the poor (income, housing and other factors) throughout the country. The single registry is a rolling census of poor people in Brazil and is used by other government programmes as well. Bolsa Familia has registered impressive

impacts on food security. It is well targeted: 94% of the transfers reached families in the two poorest quintiles. The share of household income spent on food has increased significantly. Households that received cash transfers were 52% more likely to achieve food security. Chronic malnutrition fell by an estimated 30% among children under 6 years old and by 62% for infants aged 6-11 months (Grosh *et al.*, 2008; ILO, 2009).

Brazil's prevalence of undernourishment fell from 9% in 2000-02 to 6% in 2006-08 (FAO, 2011b). Two main reasons can be identified for this success: a strong commitment by the government to eliminate food and nutrition insecurity; and an integrated approach that includes civil society and the private sector in the conceptualisation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes. But many hurdles remain to overcome food insecurity in a sustainable way. Among ten challenges identified by CONSEA (2009), the exclusion of marginalised groups prompted the launch in May 2012 of a complementary programme, Brasil Carinhoso, which aims to reach an estimated 700,000 families living in extreme poverty not covered by any current programme.

3.3.2 India[23]

India since the 1970s: India in the 1970s was characterised by features remarkably different from now: nearly half the population was poor, in aggregate India was a food deficit grain importing country, annual economic growth was consistently below 3% (derisively known as the 'Hindu Rate of Growth'), modern technologies were unavailable for programme implementation, financial and banking infrastructure had not penetrated deeply into rural areas, where close to 80% of the population lived. All these features have changed for the better. The Indian economy has undergone a sea-change since the 1970s. Economic growth surged, the incidence of poverty has gradually fallen, 40% of the population are now urbanised, rural areas have witnessed significant expansion of financial and banking outlets and a rapid penetration of cell-phones, and IT has emerged as a leading growth sector, accounting for a large share of foreign exchange earnings. These dramatic changes in growth and socio-economic transformation have also given rise to new sources of vulnerability, while the old hardcore chronically poor (especially in dryland farming areas) have benefited the least. The social protection system has only recently begun to adjust to the new challenges; many issues remain unresolved.

Who are the food insecure? Food insecure households are dominated by landless labour-constrained families, marginal farmers owning tiny parcels of land, most farming and non-farming households in rural dryland areas, widows, persons with disabilities, low-income workers in unorganised sectors in both rural and urban areas, urban marginals living mostly in peripheral urban slums, and especially women and children in all these categories. To these old chronically food insecure poor have been added large numbers of 'new poor' who are mostly transitory poor, moving above and below the poverty threshold as employment and incomes fluctuate – a characteristic of the new-found dynamism of the Indian economy of the last decade. Some estimates suggest that the transitory poor are now a higher proportion than the chronically poor.

The social protection strategy: India has adopted a three-pronged strategy for addressing household food insecurity. First, place cash/income in the hands of the hardcore poor so they can command food in the market. There is no shortage of food but there is an entitlement failure: these households are food insecure because they are demand-constrained. Second, reduce the price of food through subsidised distribution of food to targeted food insecure households. These programmes thus operate on both the supply-side and the demand-side. While the supply-side Public Distribution System has existed since the Independence, the demand-side programmes constitute a slow adjustment of the strategy to the newly emerging growth-induced vulnerabilities. A third set of programmes aim at protecting households against shocks, both *ex ante* and *ex post*.

[23] This section draws from 'Social protection for a changing India' (World Bank 2011a), written by a team led by Philip O'Keefe and including Kalanidhi Subbarao.

The first set of programmes that place cash in the hands of vulnerable groups include: Indira Gandhi Old Age Pension Scheme, Disabled Pension Scheme, Widows Pension Scheme, free insurance cover for the poor against disability and accidents, heavily subsidised social insurance for workers in the unorganised sectors, and housing grants targeted to destitute households. All these programmes are mostly protective in character, inasmuch as they offer *ex ante* protection against income shocks (old age, disability, loss of breadwinner, widowhood, etc.), and enable households to command food in the market.

The second set of programmes have been in existence for several decades: the food subsidy programme known as the Public Distribution System (PDS), and the Mid-day Meal programme for school children. PDS provides subsidised wheat and rice, kerosene and sugar: the subsidy varies depending on whether a household is Below the Poverty Line or Above the Poverty Line, or destitute – known as an Annapurna household. The school feeding programme provides hot meals to children in grades 1 to 8 in government and aided schools. A new dimension has been added to these programmes, as India recently adopted a rights based approach to food security. Passing a judgement on an activist's petition, the Supreme Court ordered the government to consider rendering access to food as a matter of right. Consequently, in 2011 the National Food Security Bill was introduced in Parliament, "to provide for food and nutritional security in human life cycle approach, by ensuring access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity" (Government of India, 2011, p. 1). If passed, it will entitle 75% of all rural individuals and 50% of all urban individuals to access subsidised grain through the PDS. Free meals will also be provided to pregnant women and lactating mothers. The Bill recognises the gender dimensions of food security, notably by nominating the oldest woman in eligible households as the household head for the purpose of issuing ration cards.

A third set of programmes, public works, has also been implemented in India for many decades, and also switched to a rights based approach when the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was passed in 2005. Every rural household in need of work is entitled to apply for a job card and register at the local village council office, and should then be provided with a job within two weeks. Employment on low-skilled or unskilled public works projects is guaranteed up to a ceiling of 100 days per household per year. The unique feature of being accessible on demand makes this programme an effective intervention against chronic food insecurity, seasonal hunger and shocks such as job loss or harvest failure – it offers social assistance as well as a kind of surrogate social insurance. Since paid work is guaranteed and available at all times, shocks such as a flood or drought need not lead to a sudden loss of entitlement to food.

How well is the strategy working? The strategy has many good features; it addresses many facets of food insecurity and covers a range of vulnerable households. There is now a slow movement towards cash transfers and insurance-based social protection, as found in middle-income countries. Two basic problems are worth noting. First, the PDS – the oldest programme and the most important from the food security viewpoint – has suffered from numerous deficiencies, as described earlier. These include the inefficiency of the parastatal that manages procurement and distribution of food grains, leakages and corruption, mis-targeting of beneficiaries, and very high running costs. The school lunch programme likewise suffers from poor quality of food served, and corruption. Governance has in fact emerged as the critical weakness in all social protection programmes. It is feared that unless the leakages, inefficiency and the high costs are addressed, the expansion of these programmes under the new 'right to food' mandate may not actually guarantee food security to targeted vulnerable households.

The second problem is political inertia to do anything about the observed deficiencies, which can be fixed. A better approach to targeting of programmes can be evolved, IT-based monitoring and newly available technologies (such as biometric identification, and the ongoing Unique Identification Card initiative) can be used to prevent fraud, and fraud itself could be punished severely, innovative

mechanisms such as social audits could be strengthened, and some dismally dysfunctional programmes could be closed down. While all these possibilities exist, movement towards reform is slow, and the political compulsions of coalition governments do not offer much hope for immediate reform of the social protection system, which in theory appears to be sound for a rapidly changing India.

3.3.3 Sub-Saharan Africa

The rise of social protection up the development agenda in Africa has been associated with significant policy shifts – from food aid to cash transfers, from short-term emergency responses to longer-term predictable interventions, and from donor-driven projects to government-led programmes or at least government-donor partnerships. These shifts recognise that chronic poverty and food insecurity have structural causes that require systematic rather than ad hoc interventions (McCord and Slater, 2010). The African Union's 'Social Policy Framework for Africa', adopted in 2008, argues for a rapid expansion of social protection coverage, and endorses "an emerging consensus that a minimum package of essential social protection should cover: essential health care, and benefits for children, informal workers, the unemployed, older persons and persons with disabilities" (African Union, 2008, p. 17).

But there are significant differences across Africa. In middle-income countries like South Africa and Namibia, contributory social security systems have been established alongside government-administered social assistance schemes such as child benefits and social pensions, which are legislated and tax-funded. In very low-income countries like Ethiopia and Malawi, social security coverage is lower because fewer people are formally employed, dependence on international aid is much higher, and food insecurity is a more immediate challenge. Social protection in these contexts is dominated by support to smallholder farmers, such as input subsidies and rural public works. These programmes are typically implemented by ministries of agriculture or rural development rather than social welfare, and governments and donors are preoccupied with linking social protection to growth and 'graduation', partly because they have limited budgets and 1-5-year project cycles. These two approaches to social protection have been described as the 'Southern Africa model' and the Middle Africa model' respectively (Niño-Zarazúa *et al.*, 2010). Good examples of each come from Namibia and Ethiopia.

The Government of Namibia has implemented several social assistance programmes for decades, including the non-contributory Old Age Pension, Disability Grant, children's Maintenance Grant and Foster Care Grant. The social pension and disability grant are administered by the Ministry of Health and Social Services, while the child grants are administered by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, and financed by government's fiscal revenues. Though none of these programmes explicitly addresses food insecurity, it is recognised that the HIV/AIDS pandemic has raised the vulnerability of poor families, for instance by increasing the numbers of orphans and 'skip generation' households, and cash transfers enable recipients to meet their food and other basic needs. In drought years, social pensioners use this income to buy food for themselves and drought-affected relatives, sometimes on credit (Devereux, 2002). Also, the Ministry of Basic Education runs the School Feeding Programme, which aims to improve the performance of poor learners – primary education is free and compulsory in Namibia.

Social protection in Ethiopia is explicitly focused on food insecurity. Since 2005 the Food Security Programme (FSP) has included the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), divided into Public Works that builds community infrastructure and agricultural assets, and Direct Support that provides social assistance to the poorest; and the Household Asset Building Programme (HABP), which empowers rural households to increase their incomes, food production and assets, through support to livelihood activities, extension services and access to financial services. Households that receive a combination of transfers through the PSNP and livelihood support through the HABP are expected to

'graduate' from chronic food insecurity to 'food self-reliance' (GFDRE 2009). The FSP is implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MOARD) and is largely funded by international donors and financial institutions. Small social assistance programmes are administered by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA), which drafted a National Social Protection Strategy in 2011 and proposes several instruments, including: social safety nets, labour market programmes, social insurance schemes, programmes to improve access to basic services, and provision of special support for people in difficult circumstances.

3.4 Conceptual frameworks

One approach that is gaining momentum as a comprehensive framework is the 'social protection floor', introduced earlier in this report but elaborated here. This is followed by a proposal for a complementary 'food security floor'.

3.4.1 The Social Protection Floor

The 'social protection floor' (SPF) emerged as a United Nations response to the global 'triple F' (food, fuel and financial) crises that peaked around 2008, building also on the growing evidence-based momentum behind social protection as a powerful set of interventions that can protect household food security in the short-term while contributing to economic growth and poverty reduction in the longer-term. The 'floor' is a minimum set of social policies that aims to extend some level of social security to all. It is integrated over the life-course, meaning that individuals of all ages and personal circumstances should enjoy basic income security and access to essential social services. Income security should be guaranteed using appropriate social transfers such as child benefits, disability grants and social pensions for the non-working poor, and employment guarantees or income support for the working and unemployed poor. Universal access to essential social services such as health, education, water and sanitation and food security should also be guaranteed (ILO, 2011). The floor has both a 'horizontal' dimension – coverage or access – and a 'vertical' dimension – quality of provision.

The 'social protection floor' was initially critiqued as a blueprint that was being rolled out to countries across the world, without due consideration for different contexts or ongoing national policy processes. However, although the objective of achieving comprehensive social protection for all is clearly specified, pathways and strategies for reaching this are left to each country to decide. Implementation should build on existing social policies, paying due attention to the local context – e.g. fiscal resources and policy priorities – and the process should be nationally owned. Nonetheless, the 'social protection floor' is an explicitly rights based approach; it provides guidelines for UN member states and development partners to support countries to deliver on the human rights to social security and essential social services.

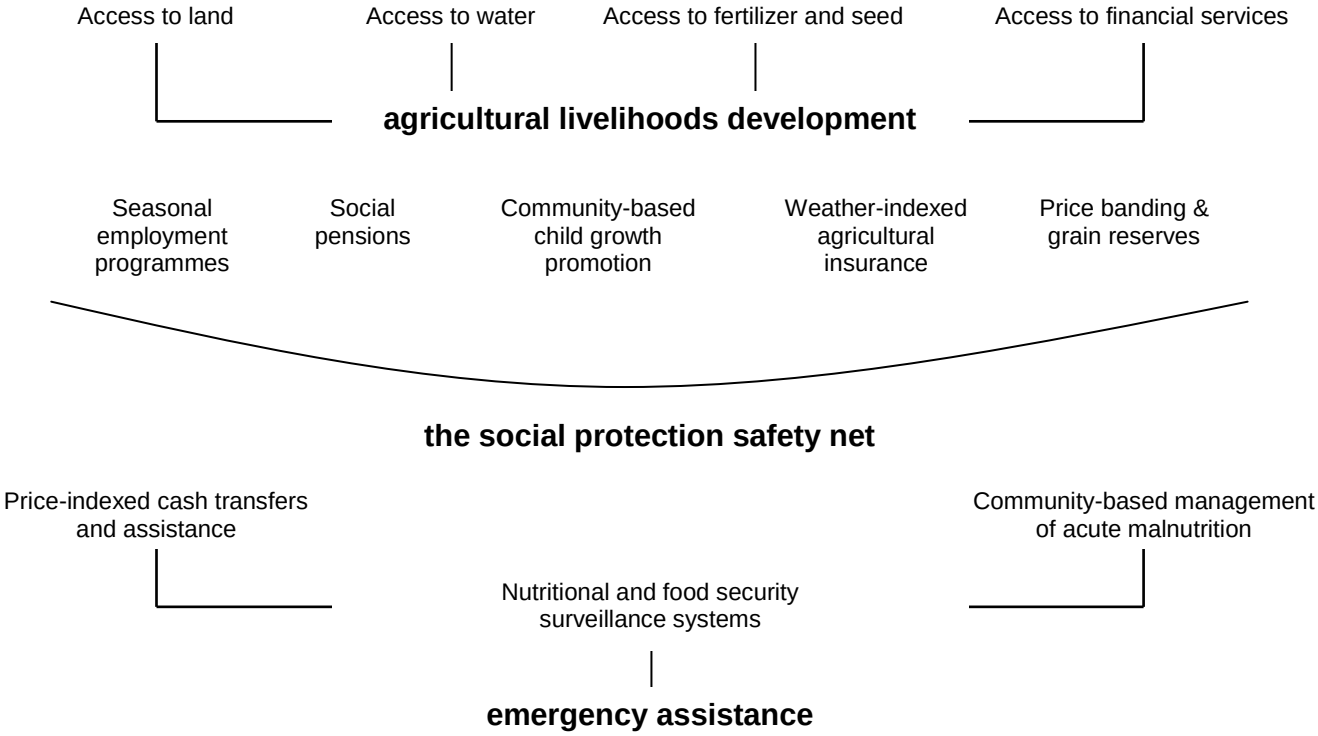
3.4.2 The Food Security Floor

The 'social protection floor' establishes a minimum set of interventions that will achieve the right to social security or social protection for all. Here we propose a complementary package of interventions – the 'food security floor' – which aims to support countries to fulfil their responsibility to deliver on the right to adequate food. The 'food security floor' recognises that food is a basic need for survival – freedom from hunger being the only human right declared a 'fundamental' right in the ICESCR – and proposes a minimum set of interventions that would ensure food security for all. While there are obvious overlaps between the two agendas, the 'food security floor' focuses explicitly on measures to ensure or protect individual access to food, which is especially important in countries or regions affected by chronic food deficits or occasional food shocks.

As discussed earlier, food insecurity has several dimensions (chronic, seasonal, transitory), and several causes (failures or deficits of production-, trade-, labour- or transfer-based 'entitlements' to food). The 'food security floor' would put mechanisms in place that address each of these dimensions and causes, as appropriate to the national food security context. It is important to emphasise that not all components of the 'food security floor' are social protection instruments. Also, the 'food security floor' is not a blueprint package that should be delivered or advocated uniformly in all countries. It is driven by the objective of eradicating hunger, not by any specific set of instruments. The appropriate mix of social protection and other interventions that will achieve food security for all at all times in the most cost-effective manner needs to be devised in each country, based on regularly updated needs assessments, and might well change over time.

A 'food security floor' would be rights based and would be greatly strengthened by embedding it in a 'framework law', as proposed by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN CESCR) as a major instrument in the implementation of a national strategy concerning the right to food. A framework law for a 'food security floor' should include provisions on its purpose; the targets or goals to be achieved and a realistic time-frame set for the achievement of those targets; the means by which the purpose could be achieved described in broad terms, in particular the intended collaboration with civil society, the private sector and international organisations; institutional responsibility for the process; and the national mechanisms for its monitoring, as well as possible recourse procedures. In developing the benchmarks and framework legislation, States Parties should actively involve civil society organisations (General Comment No 12 on the right to adequate food, paragraph 29).

Figure 4. Intervention framework for fighting seasonal hunger



Source: Devereux *et al.*, 2008, p. 41.

One possible model for constructing a ‘food security floor’ is the ‘Intervention framework for fighting seasonal hunger’ (Devereux *et al.*, 2008), which was proposed as a response to seasonality but also has broader applications to other manifestations of food insecurity. The framework has three levels (Figure 4). The first level is a set of scalable social assistance and nutrition programmes that should always be in place to address emergencies, and might include price-indexed cash transfers or food assistance. Second is the ‘social protection safety net’, including both assistance and insurance mechanisms – seasonal public works or employment guarantee schemes, weather-indexed insurance, grain reserve management – designed to prevent people falling into hunger and destitution. The third level comprises measures to promote agriculture – access to land, water, fertiliser and seed, and financial services – which could be delivered as either agricultural development or social protection programmes (e.g. input subsidies).

4 CROSS-CUTTING IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

This chapter considers several issues and challenges that arise in the process of designing and implementing social protection programmes, selected because they are among the most common issues raised by policy-makers and analysts – how to target programmes accurately? How to avoid 'dependency'? is social protection affordable? etc. – and there is a growing body of evidence on each of these topics.

4.1 Targeting

'Targeting' can be defined as any mechanism that identifies individuals who are eligible to receive support from a programme, and screens out the ineligible. Conversely, a 'universal' programme (e.g. a general food price subsidy) is accessible to all citizens and residents in a country. Whether social protection programmes should be targeted or universal is a long-running debate, as is the discussion – based on a limited evidence base – about how to target most accurately and cost-effectively.

There are at least three powerful reasons for targeting. First is to achieve the programme objectives – if a cash transfer programme aims to reduce food insecurity, it makes sense to transfer cash only to food insecure people. Second is the pragmatic argument that policy-makers always face budget constraints, so maximising the impacts of public spending requires targeting limited resources where they are most needed. Third is a political or ideological imperative for redistributive equity – transferring resources from rich to poor reduces inequality and is welfare-enhancing.

There are also several powerful arguments against targeting. Firstly, targeting inevitably introduces two types of errors: **inclusion error** or 'leakages' – transferring resources to ineligible or non-needy people, which is inefficient and costly because it wastes resources – and **exclusion error** or 'under-coverage' – failing to transfer resources to eligible people, which is inequitable and can even have fatal consequences (e.g. during a food crisis). Exclusion errors arise either because of mistakes in the targeting process or because the programme budget is insufficient to reach all eligible beneficiaries. Because exclusion errors have humanitarian costs, Cornia and Stewart (1993) argued for weighting these higher than inclusion errors, but policy-makers facing budget constraints tend to focus more on inclusion errors.

Critics of targeting also argue that universal or untargeted programmes are the only way of guaranteeing that everyone who needs social protection actually gets it – in technical terms, to ensure zero exclusion errors. For this reason, universal programmes are also favoured by a rights based perspective. However, the right to social protection does not necessarily require free transfers to everyone. The right to income security in old age, for instance, can be achieved by a combination of public and private pensions, supplemented by social pensions for older persons not covered by contributory social security schemes.

A third concern is that targeting is associated with various costs, and any analysis of targeting effectiveness should take account of the 'full costs' of targeting, not only administrative.

- **Administrative costs** describes the actual spending on identifying eligible beneficiaries and screening out the ineligible. Finely tuned mechanisms (e.g. individual means testing) tend to be more expensive, but theoretically more accurate, than cruder mechanisms such as geographic targeting (blanket coverage of a food insecure area), which are cheaper but less accurate.

- **Private costs** of targeting refers to the expense and time that applicants incur in registering for a programme, including transport costs and queuing time. If these 'access' costs are too high they can unintentionally exclude eligible individuals.

- **Social costs** arise from the separation of communities into 'beneficiaries' and 'non-beneficiaries', which could undermine social cohesion and social capital – beneficiaries might be stigmatised and non-beneficiaries might be envious and resentful. Public transfers could also 'crowd out' private transfers, eroding informal community support systems based on social networks.

- **Political costs** of targeting were succinctly articulated by Amartya Sen, who wrote: "Benefits meant exclusively for the poor often end up being poor benefits" (Sen 1995: 14), meaning that universal programmes generate broader political support than narrowly targeted transfers for the poorest. Another risk is that the targeting process could become politicised, either to channel resources such as food aid to government supporters or to buy the political support of opponents.

There are many ways to identify eligible beneficiaries for a social protection or food security programme. Each has advantages and disadvantages.

- **Means testing** is based on an assessment of each individual's income and assets. In theory this is the most accurate mechanism, but it requires detailed personal information that must be verified and regularly updated, because claimants have incentives to under-report income and because the livelihoods of poor people tend to be variable and unpredictable. This makes means testing extremely expensive to implement. **Proxy means testing**, using a combination of observable characteristics that are associated with poverty (such as housing quality or access to electricity), is not as accurate but is considerably cheaper.

- **Community-based targeting** draws on local knowledge, by asking residents to identify their poorest or most vulnerable community members. Though potentially more accurate and less expensive than other mechanisms, it requires a cohesive community – so typically performs better in rural than urban areas – and is susceptible to 'elite capture', so it requires careful design and close supervision to ensure it is well implemented.

- **Categorical targeting** defines eligibility in terms of characteristics that are fairly easy to observe, difficult to manipulate or falsify, and well correlated with poverty or food insecurity. Common targeting categories are based on age (e.g. older persons), gender (female-headed households) or disability. Another example is **geographic targeting** – delivering benefits to all residents of an area. Categorical targeting is attractive to programme administrators because it is relatively inexpensive, but targeting errors can be high – e.g. not all female-headed households are food insecure (inclusion error), but many male-headed households are (exclusion error).

- **Self-targeting** is achieved by raising the costs of accessing benefits or lowering the value of benefits to discourage the non-poor. This may involve: demanding heavy labour and paying low wages on public works schemes; making cash or food recipients queue for transfers at designated pay-points at certain times; transferring 'inferior' commodities (e.g. low quality wheat, or yellow maize). There are ethical concerns with this approach, which can also be counter-productive by reducing programme impacts. For example, lowering public works wages could mean the income participants receive is insufficient to reduce poverty and food insecurity.

Often targeting mechanisms are used in combination, rather than singly, and evidence suggests that this enhances their accuracy (Coady *et al.*, 2004b). For instance, a drought relief programme might first define the drought-affected districts (geographic targeting), then offer public works employment to food insecure people who can work (self-targeting), and free food or cash transfers to food insecure people who cannot work, like child-headed households and older people without support (categorical targeting).

A comprehensive review of targeting in over 100 social transfer programmes found no evidence that any targeting mechanism is more accurate than others."There is no clearly preferred method for all types of programs or all country contexts. In our sample of programs, 80 percent of the variability in targeting performance was due to differences *within* targeting methods, and only 20 percent due to differences *across* methods." (Coady *et al.*, 2004b, p. 2). The choice of targeting mechanism is context-specific and depends mainly on programme objectives, while targeting accuracy depends on how rigorously it is implemented.

The debate about whether interventions should be targeted or universal recurs in relation to food security instruments, notably in terms of food subsidies and farm input subsidies, as discussed earlier in this report. The evidence broadly supports the use of targeting, in that targeted programmes, compared, to universal transfers, usually ensure greater resource flows to the poor and food insecure – "but not always" (Coady *et al.*, 2004a, p. 2). Finally, there is limited information on the cost-effectiveness of different targeting methods, and this is an area where investments in knowledge would have high returns.

4.2 Modalities

Should social transfers be made in cash, as food or other in-kind resources, or should beneficiaries be given a voucher that allows them to purchase a limited set of commodities?[24] Economic theory suggests that cash is preferable to in-kind transfers because it does not distort individual consumption or production choices. Cash transfers provide recipients with the freedom to choose whatever they wish to consume, whether it be food or other necessities such as schooling and health related expenditures (Hanlon *et al.*, p. 2010). Cash distribution can stimulate local agricultural production and non-agricultural activities. Further, distributing cash is often cheaper than distributing food or other commodities, with studies showing that in-kind administrative costs are 20-25% higher than for cash transfers (Cunha *et al.,* 2010; Ahmed *et al.*, 2010b).

These considerations suggest there should be no controversy; that cash transfers should always be preferred. But four considerations militate against such a simplistic view. First, the provision of cash requires well-functioning local food markets. Barrett *et al.* (2007) ask the following questions: Do intended recipients of cash transfers have physical access to markets? Can traders bring additional supplies to local markets without raising prices? Are the food markets faced by consumers competitive? If the answer to any of these questions is "no", the purchasing power of cash transfers will likely be diminished by higher food prices. The global food price crisis of 2007/08 drew attention to the fact that cash transfers are rarely index-linked, so they rapidly lose value when food prices rise due to inflation, seasonality, or supply failure. An innovative approach was initiated in Malawi in 2006, where the Dowa Emergency Cash Transfers (DECT) project tracked food prices during a localised drought and adjusted cash transfer payments every month to maintain a constant purchasing power. Another innovation was successfully trialled in Swaziland's Emergency Drought Relief (EDR) programme in 2007/08, when social transfers were delivered half in cash and half in food. Conversely, in Ethiopia a failure to match food price rises on the PSNP – where food prices trebled in three years but PSNP cash transfers rose by only 33% during this period – resulted in a swing in beneficiary preferences against cash and in favour of food (Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux, 2010).

Second, food and cash transfers appear to have different effects on food consumption. Using non-experimental methods, Ahmed and Shams (1994) and del Ninno and Dorosh (2003) find that in Bangladesh, the marginal propensity to consume food out of food transfers is higher than out of cash, a finding echoed by Ahmed *et al.* (2010a). On the other hand, an analysis of cash and food assistance in Sri Lanka in the aftermath of the 2005 tsunami found that, relative to households receiving food, households that received an equivalent amount of cash were more likely to improve

[24] This section draws on Margolies and Hoddinott (2012), which provides a more detailed review of this controversy as well as additional references and case studies.

the diversity of their diets, buying more meat, dairy products and processed foods (Sharma, 2006). But cash payments were made bi-weekly while food payments were delivered in bulk on two occasions, so it is not possible to distinguish between the impacts of the transfer modality and differences due to timing. In rural Malawi, which also launched a combined food and cash transfer programme, a detailed cost/benefit analysis revealed that households that received cash showed considerable improvements in food consumption and dietary diversity, implying that cash (instead of food) transfers do not necessarily lead to lower food consumption (Audsley *et al.*, 2010).

Third, as a general principle, recipients of assistance should have some say in the form of assistance they receive. In Ethiopia, Berhane *et al.* (2012) found that, while most beneficiaries of the Productive Safety Net programme preferred receiving food rather than cash, these preferences were not stable over time. Preferences shifted toward food and away from cash between 2006 and 2008, a consequence of rapidly rising food prices especially in the first six months of 2008 (as noted above), but this was reversed in most regions between 2008 and 2010 as food prices fell. In Bangladesh's Food for Asset Creation programme, nearly 75% of participants expressed their preference for being paid in food rather than cash (Ahmed *et al.*, 2010b). Ahmed *et al.* (2010a) find that the poorest beneficiaries prefer food transfers, but this preference is less pronounced amongst those who are (relatively) better off. Also, while men typically prefer cash transfers, women in many countries tend to prefer food, probably because of their dominant role as food managers within their families (Holmes *et al.*, 2009).

Fourth, in the 1970s and 1980s, a number of countries introduced food stamps as part of efforts to offset macroeconomic adjustments (Jamaica) or to replace a generalized food subsidy (Sri Lanka) (Edirisinghe, 1987; Ezemenari and Subbarao, 1999). While food stamps subsequently fell out of favour, there has been renewed interest in the last five years. The administrative costs of providing a voucher are less than those of providing food. Like cash, they put purchasing power into local communities but because their use is restricted to certain commodities, there are fewer fears that they will be misappropriated or misused. In a randomised intervention fielded in Ecuador, Hidrobo *et al.* (2012) find that the cost of providing vouchers is similar to the cost of providing cash, but vouchers had a greater impact on diet quality. The World Food Programme has used vouchers to deliver food assistance to localities, such as southern Somalia, where security considerations preclude the delivery of either food or cash. With the caveat that the literature on the impact of vouchers is evolving, it appears that vouchers are especially well suited to urban areas where there are well-functioning markets and merchants who have the capacity, notably the working capital, to handle vouchers.

Box 13. Burkina Faso: urban food vouchers

The food price hikes of 2007/08 severely affected the urban poor, who depend on markets rather than production for their food security. In response, Burkina Faso launched a food voucher programme in all urban areas, with the support of the World Food Programme (WFP). Targeting was implemented in two stages. First, poor urban areas were pre-selected based on quantitative indicators of poverty. Second, within each selected area, poor families were identified based on proxy indicators such as quality of dwelling, asset ownership, means of transport and health status. Out of 200,000 urban households, 31,500 (16%) were selected. Each household was given six vouchers, each worth US$ 3, which were distributed by the Red Cross. The transfer amounted to 45% of a vulnerable household's monthly income. Vouchers could be redeemed at shops which had a contract with WFP. A preliminary evaluation suggests that the programme was well targeted, with very low inclusion error and an exclusion error of 22%. Beneficiaries' access to food increased significantly, at a time when they also had to contend with a deteriorating employment situation. However, several operational challenges were encountered, especially low capacity at the level of implementers.

Source: WFP, 2010.

4.3 Dependency

Governments across the world are often reluctant to introduce social protection, especially social transfers, because they have concerns about 'dependency'. They are persuaded by the argument that giving regular cash or food transfers to people will cause them to lose their motivation to work towards self-reliance, that the possibility of living on 'handouts' will cause increasing numbers of people to choose this lifestyle of 'leisure', and that this will ultimately become a fiscally unsustainable drag on economic growth. This report argues that the 'dependency' debate confuses two entirely separate things, and that concerns regarding disincentive effects are exaggerated.

Every community and every society has some members who are unable to fend for themselves, and need the support of others. The state has a duty to underwrite the subsistence needs of these individuals, in the form of social assistance, and 'dependent' community members have a right to expect this support. In a sense, social protection exists precisely because of this interdependence, between members of society with needs and others with the ability to meet these needs. Social transfers can also alleviate pressure on relatives of recipients who previously supported them, despite being equally poor and vulnerable. For these reasons, we agree with Lentz *et al.* (2005, p. 12): "Helping individuals, communities and organisations meet basic needs when they otherwise could not – fostering positive dependency – is indisputably desirable". There is another form of 'negative dependency', however. 'Dependency syndrome' refers to situations where people deliberately change their behaviour or their characteristics in order to qualify for social protection, or to remain eligible rather than exit the programme.

The most common concern by policy-makers is that transfers to beneficiaries will make them 'lazy', or more precisely that they will reduce work effort. This issue has been extensively studied in the context of conditional cash transfers. Available evidence concurs that the negative incentive effects on adult labour supply among beneficiary households are at most modest and often nil. Studies by Parker and Skoufias (2000) of Oportunidades in Mexico, Edmonds and Schady (2009) of Bono de Desarrollo Humano in Ecuador, and Ferreira *et al.* (2009) of the CEESP in Cambodia, largely found no evidence of adult labour disincentive effects. Britto and Medeiros (2008) found that the two large cash transfer programmes in Brazil (BPC and Bolsa Familia) produce no negative effects on adult labour supply. A panel survey of PROGRESA in Mexico found that women and men actually used some of their cash transfers to look for work, and some moved from family enterprises to higher-paid private sector employment (Skoufias and di Maro, 2006).[25]

Such findings are not unique to conditional cash transfers. Concerns that regular cash transfers will cause recipients to 'choose leisure' are not supported by evidence from the (unconditional) Child Support Grant in South Africa, where adults in recipient households are more likely to seek and find work – using some grant money to pay for transport and child-care – than poor households not receiving these grants (Samson *et al.* 2004). When a universal 'Basic Income Grant' was piloted in one community In Namibia, unemployment fell from 64% to 52% within six months, because recipients invested some of their grants in informal sector micro-enterprises (bread-baking, dress-making) and their neighbours had more cash to buy these goods and services. Dependency was reduced in other ways as well. Women gained financial and sexual autonomy from men, and low-paid workers were empowered to demand fair wages and decent working conditions from their employers (Basic Income Grant Coalition 2008). This evidence suggests that cash transfers can reduce the dependence of recipients on their relatives and neighbours, and eventually even on the state; cash

[25] There are studies that do find negative effects on adult labour supply but the magnitudes of these impacts tend to be small. Damon and Glewwe (2007) found that households enrolled in a CCT work 2-7 fewer hours per week than comparable households not enrolled. Maluccio and Flores (2005) found that Nicaraguas' Red de Proteccion Social was associated with a significant reduction in hours worked by adult men (but not by women) in the preceding week. De Brauw *et al.* (2012) find that while participation in Bolsa Familia reduces labour supply to the formal sector, this was offset by increased labour supplied to the informal sector.

transfers can reduce women's dependence on men; and cash transfers can reduce the dependence of low-paid workers on exploitative employers.

Concerns regarding disincentive effects have long been a feature of debates around food aid. It is argued that food aid depresses local food prices and undermines incentives for farmers to produce food for the market, who might even switch out of food crops towards more lucrative 'cash crops', reducing the national harvest and requiring higher levels of food imports and food aid in subsequent years. The distribution of food aid, whether as emergency relief or food-for-work or school feeding, also takes business away from local traders and inhibits the emergence of a competitive market. But existing evidence does not support these hypotheses (Abdulai *et al.* 2005). To take another example, participants in Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) were able to *increase* their level of crop production (Berhane *et al.*, 2012).

Another concern is that transfers may 'crowd out' money received from private remittances, or community-based organisations (CBOs) or NGOs. The evidence again is mixed. Albarran and Attanasio (2003) found some evidence of this in Mexico's Oportunidades, and Nielsen and Olinto (2008) found similar evidence in Nicaragua. Davis and Teruel (2000), however, found no evidence of crowding out in Oportunidades and Berhane *et al.* (2012) found no evidence that private transfers are crowded out by Ethiopia's (PSNP).

There is negligible evidence, other than anecdotes, to support the prejudicial view that social protection generates widespread dependency syndrome, by encouraging recipients to work less or to behave strategically to qualify for social assistance. Rather than generating dependency, well designed social protection interventions can be empowering and can increase rather than reduce self-reliance and labour market participation. Concerns regarding disincentive effects should not prevent policy-makers from implementing social protection programmes that reduce food insecurity. However, this does not imply that no attention should be paid to these effects. Clearly, if transfers are excessively generous, incentives to work might be adversely affected. To date, however, overly generous transfers do not seem to be widespread: "programs with benefits that are too low are more frequent than programs with benefits that are too high" (Grosh *et al.*, 2008, p. 10).

4.4 Graduation

Graduation refers to "a process whereby recipients of cash or food transfers move from a position of depending on external assistance to a condition where they no longer need these transfers, and can therefore exit the programme" (Devereux, 2010, p. 9). Graduation from social protection programmes is a preoccupation for governments and donor agencies that are concerned about the fiscal sustainability of long-term social transfers, and want to avoid creating 'dependency' on these transfers by recipients. Graduation is sometimes seen as an antidote to 'dependency syndrome'. It offers funders an exit strategy that allows the programme to be time-bound with a fixed term and a fixed budget. Critics of graduation thinking argue that it contradicts the principle that social protection is a right that cannot be limited or 'projectised'. Further, as our discussion of dependency has noted, there are some groups – such as pensioners – who should not be considered as candidates for graduation.

There are other complicating factors. First, the variability of poor people's livelihoods might mean that households are moving in and out of eligibility for social protection from one period to the next – graduation is a linear concept (people are assumed to progress up an income scale), but livelihoods are dynamic and often unpredictable, especially in food insecure areas. Second, it is possible that this 'yo-yo' effect might be exacerbated by the programme itself – receiving transfers pushes recipients above the eligibility threshold, but withdrawing transfers drops them below the threshold again. Third, households that are aware of eligibility criteria and graduation thresholds might adopt strategic behaviour to remain below the threshold.

Further, an important distinction should be drawn between 'threshold' graduation – the participant has reached a level of income or assets where they are assessed as no longer eligible for social assistance – and 'sustainable' graduation, a more dynamic concept that implies "(a) the capacity to generate adequate streams of future food and income; and (b) resilience against future shocks" (Devereux, 2010, p. 9). Crossing an income or asset threshold at a point in time does not necessarily mean that the household is resilient and will remain above the threshold in future. This dual requirement is explicit in Ethiopia's approach to household graduation from the Productive Safety Net Programme, which is conceptualised as a transition from 'chronically food insecure' to 'food sufficient'. "A household has graduated when, in the absence of receiving PSNP transfers, it can meet its food needs for all 12 months and is able to withstand modest shocks" (FSCB, 2007, p. 1).

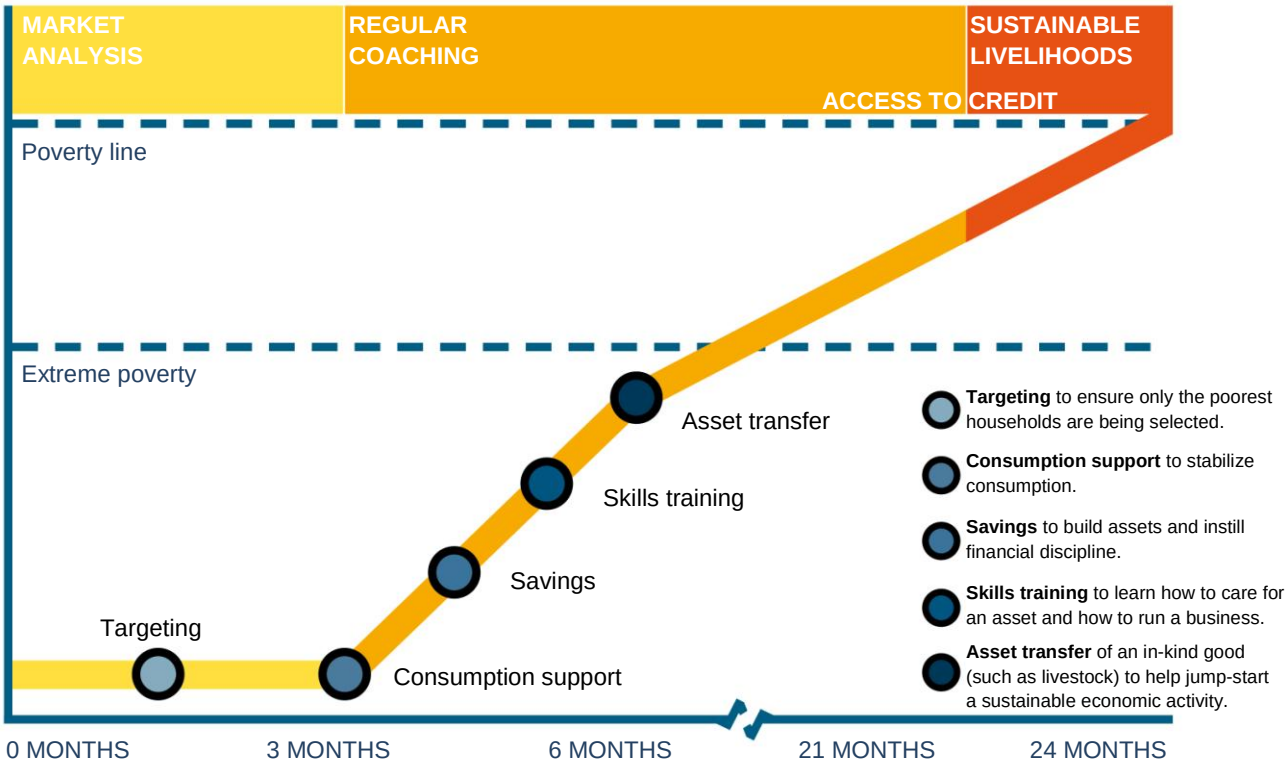
While this is a good working definition of food security, the challenge is to define "food needs" and a household's ability "to withstand modest shocks" in operational terms – with simple but robust indicators that can be easily and accurately monitored. With this in mind, graduation from the PSNP is based on a set of graduation 'benchmarks' – bundles of assets (livestock, farm tools, land holding) that households need to cover their annual food gap (Gilligan *et al.*, 2007). These asset bundles were converted to a cash equivalent value that varied from region to region, recognising that there are geographic differences in land quality (and thus the ability of households to generate income) and access to food markets. One limitation to this approach is that in the Ethiopian context of relatively high inflation, these benchmarks require constant recalibration.

Graduation from Rwanda's VUP is based on a participatory 'social mapping' exercise, done each year as part of the VUP targeting and retargeting process, that classifies all households in each rural community into one of six locally defined wealth categories. Households allocated to the poorest two 'Ubudehe' categories are eligible for VUP – public works if they can work, 'direct support' if they cannot. If a household is classified in category #3 or higher, it is no longer eligible for the VUP. This approach has the virtue of being community-driven, based on intimate local knowledge rather than 'objective' indicators that can be falsified or manipulated. But there is evidence of 'churning' in and out of eligibility from year to year (Asselin, 2010), and there is a risk that the community-based mechanism will become distorted over time, since there are now substantial benefits attached to being classified in 'Ubudehe' category #1 or #2.

Although evaluations of cash transfer programmes confirm that some cash is often invested in livelihoods (Barrientos and Scott, 2008) most of the cash is allocated to basic consumption needs and the investment effect is insufficient to generate a graduation trajectory on its own. For this reason, graduation in both Ethiopia and Rwanda is promoted through a combination of cash transfers (either free or with a work requirement) and support to livelihoods – 'packages' such as beekeeping kits to produce honey for sale in Ethiopia, microcredit for income-generating activities such as rearing poultry to sell chickens and eggs in Rwanda. To date, there is limited independent empirical evidence as to whether successful graduation has occurred. In Rwanda, the microcredit component started only in 2010 and although many VUP households have moved out of Ubudehe categories #1 and #2, the total number of eligible households is constant or even rising, as some 'graduates' fall back in eligibility after a year or two.

In Bangladesh, BRAC's 'Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction' (CFPR) programme, discussed above, delivered regular cash transfers, productive assets and training, mainly to rural women living in extreme poverty. In its first phase (2002-2006), the programme succeeded in 'graduating' almost all 100,000 CFPR households from 'extreme poverty' to 'moderate poverty'. Self-reported food insecurity fell from 60% to 15%, and calorie intake increased from 1,750 to 2,145 kcal/day (Matin *et al.*, 2008). BRAC's graduation pathway is illustrated below (Figure 5).

Figure 5. The BRAC graduation model



Source: adapted from Hashemi and de Montesquiou (2011, p. 3).

To conclude, graduating participants is a rational objective for policy-makers concerned with minimising 'dependency' and managing the costs of social protection programmes. However, taking forward graduation must be done cautiously. Unlike targeting, there is not yet a rich body of evidence to draw on to guide programme designers on appropriate graduation mechanisms. It must be recognised that some people can never graduate, that crossing a threshold does not necessarily mean the household will be self-reliant in the future, and that premature graduation could leave people worse off than before, if their informal support networks collapse because of their participation in the programme. Given these realities, policy-makers should focus on the core function of social protection – ensuring that poor and vulnerable households are effectively insured against falling below a minimum subsistence level at all times, instead of pushing them above this level and out of the programme in as short a time as possible.

4.5 Affordability

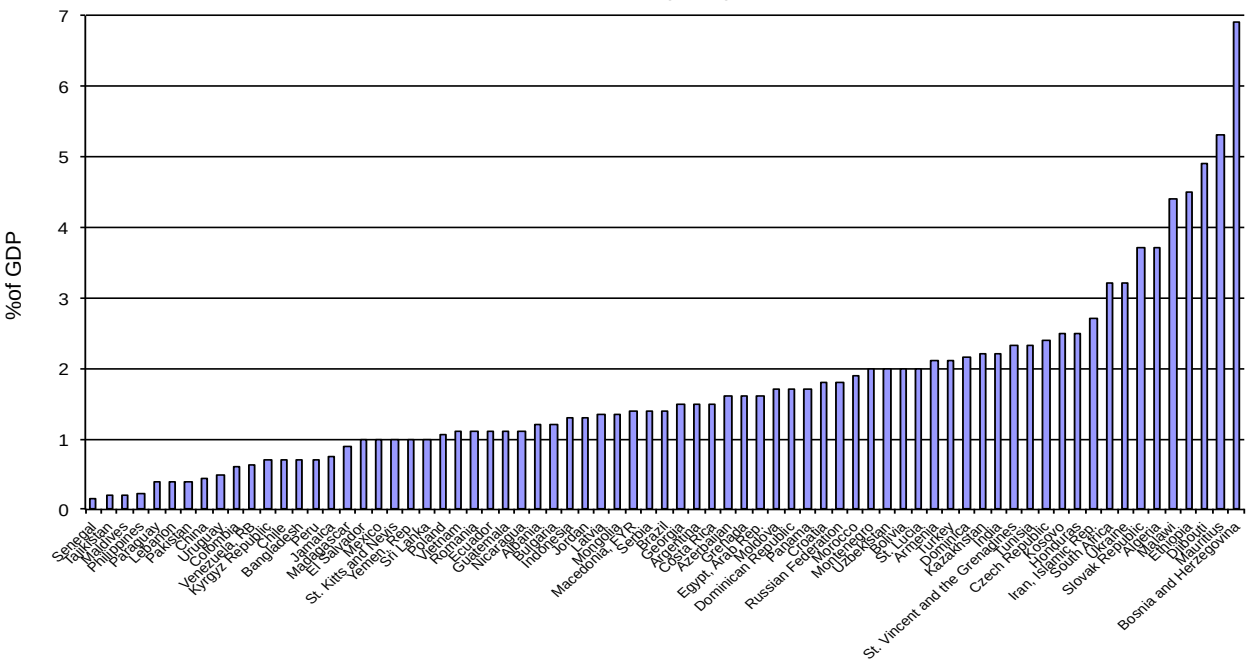
Discussions surrounding the implementation of social protection programmes inevitably turn to the crucial issue of financing. Is comprehensive social protection affordable in low-income countries? It is common to hear policy-makers state that while they like the idea of introducing or expanding the social protection system, they simply do not have the fiscal space to do so. Cost considerations are also invoked as a reason for not making social protection rights based: economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights are considered "unaffordable" by many governments. Such statements confuse constraints with choices.

Pal *et al.* (2005) simulates three scenarios of basic social protection. In scenario III, based on the social cash transfer programme in Zambia, the 10% most destitute households are given a cash transfer of US$13.71 (PPP) per month. Pal *et al.* find that in the four African countries they consider (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Guinea and Senegal) the cost would range from 0.15% to 0.30% of GDP. It is important to note that while this would reduce food insecurity amongst the poorest, it would not eliminate food insecurity in these countries. But would even this modest intervention be affordable?

In 2010, these four countries spent between 1.3% and 1.6% of their GDP on military expenditure (SIPRI, 2012) – and other countries in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere recorded much higher percentages. Even in very poor countries, therefore, social transfers could in principle be financed by reallocations of existing government resources.

More ambitious programmes would cost more. Grosh *et al.* (2008) cite a series of studies on the fiscal costs of universal pensions in sub-Saharan Africa. Depending on the age cut-off and the size of the transfers, they find that costs could range from 0.1% of GDP to 10.6% of GDP (Grosh *et al.*, 2008; see also Kakwani and Subbarao, 2007). ILO (2008) finds that the costs for an income security or employment scheme in a selected group of Asian and sub-Saharan African countries could range from 0.3% to 0.9% of GDP; while the costs of a "basic social protection package" (including universal old age and disability pensions, basic child benefits, universal access to essential health care, and social assistance or a 100-day employment guarantee scheme) range from 4% to over 10% of GDP (ILO, 2008, p. 10). Finally, Lustig (2012) estimates that the resources required to bring everyone above the US$ 2.50 (PPP) threshold in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Mexico and Peru would be equal to 0.15%, 1.48%, 0.41%, 0.28% and 0.53% of GDP, respectively.[26]

Figure 6. Social assistance expenditure as a share of GDP



Source: OECD database (http://stats.oecd.org), a compilation of data on 87 countries taken from World Bank public expenditure reviews or other similar work.

How do these numbers compare with actual levels of spending? Figure 6 shows expenditure on 'social assistance'[27] as a percentage of GDP, for 87 countries for which data are available.[28] As can be observed, spending on social assistance is very heterogeneous, ranging from close to zero to 7%, but with most countries falling in the range of 1% to 3%. It is unusual, but not unheard of, for countries to allocate more than 5% of GDP to social assistance programmes. One such country is Mauritius, widely regarded as a development success story – Mauritius has a thriving economy and has also maintained a comprehensive social welfare system since independence, demonstrating that there is

[26] For issues related to sources of financing see Pal *et al.* (2005); Barrientos (2007); Grosh *et al.* (2008).

[27] Depending on the country, 'social assistance' includes cash transfers, targeted price subsidies, food ration shops, fee waivers, disaster relief, social investment funds, microcredit, etc.

[28] There are many countries for which no data are available, while for others the most recent data point can go as far back as the 1990s.

no inevitable trade-off between economic growth and investment in social protection (Bunwaree, 2007).

Governments can finance social protection programmes from four sources – reallocate expenditures from other sectors, increase taxes, find international grant financing, or borrow. Grosh *et al.* (2008) note that each of these has advantages and disadvantages, and there are legitimate debates over how best to balance expenditures between economic sectors, other social sectors and social protection. There may for example be benefits to building up spending on social protection over time, as a number of countries have done successfully that have gradually created comprehensive social protection systems starting from one or two small programmes. Nonetheless, the claim that social protection schemes should not be introduced because they are unaffordable is simply indefensible. All governments have resources and make choices about how to use them. More of those expenditures should go towards social protection.

4.6 Scalability

A common response to the 2008 food crisis was a call for social safety nets to protect those worst affected. Yet in practice safety nets were far less common than market-related interventions such as restrictions or bans on exports, the release of public stocks at subsidised prices and the use of input subsidies (HLPE, 2011). Even in countries with a well-functioning social safety net, such as Mexico, the immediate response was a decision to implement price subsidies, with the adjustment to the cash value of the safety net, Oportunidades, coming much later (Lustig 2008; Grosh *et al.*, 2011). While this partly reflects political economy considerations – with prices rising quickly many governments felt the need to 'do something' and stock releases or price controls could be implemented by executive fiat. But it also reflected a deeper problem, the absence of knowledge about how best to scale up a safety net in response to a shock.

'Scaling up' here means three things: to introduce a safety net programme when they are non-existent; to incorporate the new poor (as a result of higher food prices, for example); or to increase the size of the transfer to (at least partially) compensate existing beneficiaries for the loss in purchasing power when the safety net is a fixed amount of cash. The new (or modified) safety nets will have to include flexible qualification and quick certification mechanisms, and should focus on improving the productivity of subsistence farming for the rural and peri-urban poor (Lustig 2008; de Janvry and Sadoulet 2011).

Knowing how best to scale up requires considering two sets of problems. First, it is necessary to understand the nature of the shock, because different shocks have different impacts on population sub-groups. A natural disaster (tsunami or flood or earthquake or hurricane) damages or destroys household assets, reduces wage labour and non-farm income-generating opportunities, and may reduce access to inputs or adversely affect the ability of farmers to sell their produce. However, provided such shocks are localised and food markets are reasonably well integrated, they should not cause food prices to rise. By contrast, a rise in global food prices that is transmitted to local food markets does not necessarily adversely affect assets or activities, but does reduce purchasing power.[29] Second, it is important to understand whether the shock affects households that are already covered by a safety net or are outside it.

It is striking how little systematic knowledge exists about how best to scale up safety nets in response to shocks generally, and food price shocks specifically. While a Google keyword search on "global food crisis 2008 AND social safety nets" generates more than 100,000 links, there appear to be no rigorous evaluations of safety net responses to the 2008 food crisis.

[29] For more on this, see Hoddinott and Quisumbing (2010).

This does not imply that nothing is known about scalability issues. Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) has been operating since 2005. Over time, the Government of Ethiopia and donors supporting the PSNP have made considerable efforts to develop capacity within the programme to respond to localised shocks, notably drought. This capacity has taken the form of investments in local-level institutional capacity to report on climatic shocks as they occur and to develop a contingency plan should these shocks occur. A portion of the budget is held in reserve for such contingencies. Local officials are given flexibility in its use to either increase benefits to existing recipients by increasing the number of days of public works, or by using community-based targeting, to identify and temporarily include new beneficiaries who are adversely affected by this shock. This approach does not work perfectly but it clearly has great potential for addressing slow onset climatic shocks such as droughts (Berhane *et al.*, 2012). By contrast, the PSNP has only limited ability to handle food price shocks.

The PSNP experience illustrates a more general point made by Grosh *et al.* (2011, p. 6): "The simple, qualitative criteria we use to judge food crisis readiness is whether a country operates one or more high coverage or scalable poverty targeted programs with sound administrative systems that might be used as safety net response". Put simply, if governments only start to consider a safety net *after* the shock occurs, it is most likely too late to do anything effective.

A number of implications follow. First, in an increasingly shock-prone world, where there may be greater fluctuations in food prices or where climate change increases the frequency of extreme climatic events, the case for having standing safety nets is strengthened. Second, 'new' or adapted safety nets should be able to do two things and do them quickly: incorporate the new poor (as a result of higher food prices, for example) and – when applicable – increase the size of the transfer to partially compensate existing beneficiaries for their purchasing power losses. Third, regular vulnerability assessments, such as the World Food Programme's 'Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessments' which generate information on what types of households are most likely to be affected by different types of shocks, provide policy-makers with actionable information, for example, by identifying which localities or groups should be targeted should a shock occur.

Finally, social protection programme budgets should include a contingency component that allows for additional payments to beneficiaries and/or new beneficiaries should a shock occur. This is consistent with General Comment No. 19 on the right to social security, which argues that: "Special attention should be given to ensuring that the social security system can respond in times of emergency, for example during and after natural disasters, armed conflict and crop failure" (UN CESCR, 2008).

4.7 Accountability

Accountability is a key principle in operationalising a human rights based approach to food security and social protection, at every level. General Comment No. 12 states that: "Any person or group who is a victim of a violation of the right to adequate food should have access to effective judicial or other appropriate remedies at both national and international levels. ... National Ombudsmen and human rights commissions should address violations of the right to food" (UN CESCR, 1999, paragraph 32). At the level of implementation, General Comment No. 19 states that: "Beneficiaries of social security schemes must be able to participate in the administration of the social security system. The system should be established under national law and ensure the right of individuals and organizations to seek, receive and impart information on all social security entitlements in a clear and transparent manner." Paragraph 27 further states that: "Benefits should be provided in a timely manner and beneficiaries should have physical access to the social security services in order to access benefits and information."

These principles are being introduced to social protection programming, most effectively in government-run programmes that establish a justiciable (legally enforceable) 'social contract' to deliver food security and social protection between the state and citizens or residents, but also in

projects financed and implemented by donors and NGOs. The effect of upgrading access to social protection from a discretionary handout to an enforceable entitlement cannot be underestimated, not only 'morally', in terms of empowering claimants and respecting their dignity and rights but also instrumentally, by improving access to and delivery of services. Case studies from South Africa and Kenya illustrate these points.

Box 14. South Africa: a justiciable right to social assistance

The Child Support Grant (CSG) was introduced in South Africa in 1998, under an amendment to the Social Assistance Act. By 2011 it reached 11 million children, making it the largest cash transfer programme in Africa. The CSG is considered to be a success in terms of its targeting, coverage and impacts on children's well-being, including food security. One evaluation using panel data found a statistically significant reduction in self-reported hunger among children receiving the grant, compared to non-recipient children in similarly poor households (Samson *et al.*, 2011).

Proudlock (2011) shows how rapid growth in CSG take-up and expansions of eligibility criteria (in terms of the age threshold, means test and identity document requirements) were facilitated by civil society campaigns that included advocacy, commissioning research and even taking the government to court. A key finding was that the judicially enforceable constitutional right to social assistance in the South African Constitution, plus a statutory entitlement to the CSG in national law, provided the necessary foundation for civil society to hold the government legally accountable for delivering on these rights and entitlements.

Box 15. Kenya: grievance mechanisms in cash transfer programming

The Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) has delivered regular cash transfers to 60,000 poor and food insecure households in pastoralist districts of northern Kenya since 2008, with the objectives of reducing extreme poverty, malnutrition and reliance on food aid. Despite being a donor-financed pilot project with limited coverage and a 4-year funding cycle, the HSNP has introduced several innovative rights based mechanisms. An independent Rights Committee has been established in each programme community, where complaints about the HSNP can be lodged by recipients or non-recipients (e.g. individuals who feel they are eligible but were excluded), and a Social Protection Rights Coordinator has been appointed in every district.

A Programme Charter of Rights and Responsibilities grounds the HSNP in human rights principles of accountability, non-discrimination, participation, empowerment and gender equality. Norms for delivering transfers are specified in a Citizen's Service Charter: payments should be made in full and on time, pay-points should be within a reasonable distance of recipients' homes, all complaints must be addressed within 30 days, all local residents have the right to information about the programme, and to be treated with respect (Devereux and White, 2010).

CONCLUSIONS

There are powerful synergies between social protection and food security. Effective social assistance programmes can alleviate chronic food insecurity or hunger, while demand-driven or scalable social insurance and safety net programmes can address transitory food insecurity caused by seasonality or vulnerability to livelihood shocks.

This report is grounded in empirical evidence of the food security impacts of a range of social protection programmes. The evidence presented here builds a convincing case for more investment in social protection. This report is also grounded in a human rights based approach, arguing that the right to food and the right to social protection are complementary and that the realisation of both these rights is not just a moral and legal imperative, but is also essential for achieving the fundamental policy objectives of economic growth and human development.

Social protection programmes with food security objectives operate on different sources of 'entitlement' to food – production (e.g. input subsidies), labour (public works programmes), trade (food price subsidies, grain reserve management), and transfers (school feeding, supplementary feeding, cash transfers). No single social protection mechanism or package of interventions is better than all others. Selecting the most appropriate mechanism or package depends on the objectives of the intervention, and its impacts will depend on the quality of design and implementation.

A comprehensive social protection response to food insecurity and vulnerability requires a strategic approach and a coherent package of interventions, not just a single instrument or programme. Also important is to build policy linkages from social protection to other sectors – agriculture, education, health, nutrition – and to institutionalise social protection within government systems, ideally underpinned by legislation that confers justiciable claims to eligible citizens and residents.

Finally, policy-makers can learn a great deal from experiences in other countries. Numerous case studies are summarised in this report, from Africa, Asia and Latin America. All these programmes shared similar design dilemmas – how to target accurately, how to avoid dependency, which modality to adopt, and so on. Social protection is a rapidly evolving policy agenda, and innovative practices are constantly emerging that could be adapted to local contexts – e.g. redesigning public works projects as employment guarantee schemes, or introducing accountability mechanisms like grievance mechanisms and social audits.

Specific recommendations are presented at the front of this report, in two sets. The first set is intended for consideration by policy-makers and the second set is intended for the CFS. It is our hope that these recommendations, and this report as a whole, make some contribution towards ensuring the realisation of the right to adequate food for all.

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APPENDICES

A1. Key sources regarding human rights perspectives applicable to social protection for food security

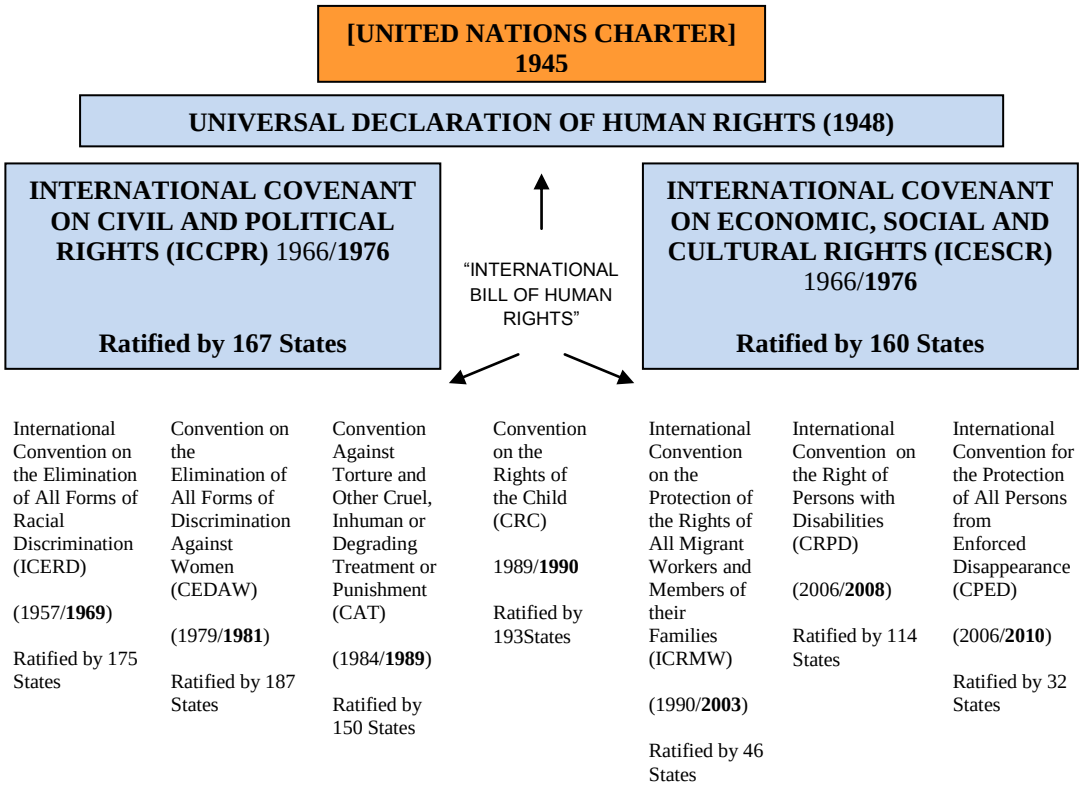
A longer version of this Appendix is available as a web annex to the report at the HLPE website: http://www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-hlpe

Evidence from international human rights law and practice – a brief introduction

This study takes a human rights based approach to addressing social protection for food security (see section 1.4). Not all readers may be fully familiar with the international system of protection and promotion of human rights which forms the platform for such an approach. This appendix provides information that can be used in appraising or planning social protection measures for food security in a human rights perspective, and offers a foundation for some of the recommendations made.

The focus in this study is on the human rights to food and social protection, but no right can be addressed in isolation from the wider international human rights norms, principles and procedures embedded in international human rights law. For the reader to comprehend its potential for work with social protection for food security, this appendix briefly presents some of the main characteristics of that framework and a few details of those two specific rights and their interpretations. Further readings and links to basic documents to consult electronically are also provided.

Figure 7. Overview of the key international human rights instruments



Source: based on Eide and Kracht (2005).

The United Nations Charter, adopted in 1945, set the promotion of human rights as one of the three main purposes of the UN: peace and security, justice and human rights, and economic and social development cooperation. The content and list of human rights were spelled out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948 and elaborated in subsequent human rights instruments, both legally binding (conventions) and non-binding (declarations).The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) constitute together with UDHR, the International Bill of Human Rights. Subsequent conventions focus on rights in relation to particular themes and population groups, including women and children. Figure 7 shows the major binding human rights conventions, years of their adoption and entry into force, and the numbers of states that have ratified them as of 1 June 2012. All conventions are independent, and none of the special conventions (seven to date) are subordinated to one or the other of the Covenants. All can be consulted at the website of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.[30]

Based on these conventions and declarations, a jurisprudence and practice have evolved. Elaborate interpretations of the legal provisions have been made by authoritative UN bodies elected to monitor implementation of the rights contained in the conventions; a conceptual framework has emerged to analyse and identify corresponding obligations of States Parties to adopt the necessary legislation and policy measures; procedures for monitoring compliance by States Parties to the conventions have been established; principles have been agreed to observe in designing and implementing policies from a human rights perspective, and optional legislative and other measures have been proposed to ensure sustainability and facilitate claims, grievances and remedies if human rights are violated or breached, and mechanisms for accountability. Each set is briefly touched upon below.

On the legal norms and their interpretations in General Comments

Both the right to food and the right to social security were contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. They were further established in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1966.[31] Article 9 states: “The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to social security, including social insurance”. In article 11.1 the States Parties recognise the right to food as part of the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, *“including adequate food*, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions”. In article 11.2 they recognise *the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunge*r and commit themselves to take “individually and through international co-operation, the measures, including specific programmes, which are needed”.

The rather vague formulations of these and other rights as legal norms contained in the Covenant (and in other binding human rights conventions) have been further interpreted in ‘General Comments’ on each right and their meaning and implications for States that have ratified them (States Parties). For each convention an independent committee of experts elected by UN member states is mandated to monitor States Parties’ compliance with their content according to these interpretations. They thereby also serve to give direction to governments for implementation, and to civil society as a basis for holding governments accountable. General Comment No. 12 from 1999 interprets the right to adequate food,[32] and General Comment No. 19 from 2007 interprets the right to social security.[33]

[30] www.ohchr.org (go to ‘Your Human Rights’, then ‘International Human Rights’).

[31] www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cescr.htm.

[32] www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/0/3d02758c707031d58025677f003b73b9.

[33] www.fao.org/righttofood/publi_01_en.htm.

Drawing *inter alia* on General Comment No. 12, interested governments further developed a set of practical Right to Food Guidelines as recommended by the 2nd World Food Summit in 2002, endorsed by the FAO Council in 2004.[34]

Obligations of States and monitoring of implementation

Article 2.1 of the ICESCR sets out the general requirements for States Parties for realising the rights it contains. "Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to take steps, individually and through international assistance and co-operation, especially economic and technical, to the maximum of its available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the rights recognized in the present Covenant by all appropriate means, including particularly the adoption of legislative measures." The concepts "progressively" and "to the maximum of its available resources" are paramount to understanding the realisation of human rights – including the right to food and the right to social security (or social protection) – as *processes* that may take some time but in the right direction, rather than as impossible expectations of full achievements in the short-term.

Article 9 on social security and Article 11 on food must be read in light of this provision as the basis of obligations. The different categories of obligations (outlined in section 1.4 of this report) are to *respect, protect* and *fulfil* with subdivisions of fulfil in terms of *facilitate* or *provide.*[35] They are illustrated for the right to adequate food as follows, in General Comment No. 12 (paragraph 15).

- The obligation to *respect* existing access to adequate food requires States Parties not to take any measures that result in preventing such access as already exists and need no change.
- The obligation to *protect* requires measures by the State to ensure that enterprises or individuals do not deprive individuals of their access to adequate food.
- The obligation to *fulfil (facilitate)* means that States must proactively engage in activities intended to strengthen people's access to and utilisation of resources and means to ensure their livelihood, including food security.
- Finally, whenever an individual or group is unable to enjoy the right to adequate food by the means at their disposal, States have the obligation to *fulfil (provide)* that right directly.

A 'Right to Food Matrix' was developed by researchers in the late 1980s to inspire operationalisation of this framework for obligations specifically in relation to local/household food security conditions (Oshaug *et al.*, 1994; see Figure 8).[36] Social protection measures for the right to food as reviewed in this study would mostly fall in the 'provide' and/or 'facilitate' categories of state obligations. A systemic approach to food security would make use of the whole set of obligations, contextualised and specified for each food security attribute in line with recommendations in this report. Similar matrices could be constructed for other livelihood components.

States Parties to the ICESCR are obliged under its Article 16 to submit reports on the measures they have adopted and progress made in achieving the observance of the rights recognised in the Covenant. This obligatory reporting system is designed principally to assist each State Party in fulfilling its obligations under the Covenant and serves to achieve a variety of objectives (listed in UN

[34] www.fao.org/righttofood/publi_01_en.htm.

[35] Originating in a United Nations University seminar in Norway in 1981 (Eide 1984), this framework for state obligations was first officially proposed in a study on the right to adequate food for the UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities in 1987 and published in 1989 (UN 1987/1989). It was first used in connection with a general comment in GC12 on the right to adequate food in 1999, and in all subsequent comments from the UN Committee on ESCR and other research or documents regarding state obligations for human rights.

[36] Originally conceived in 1986 by Oshaug *et al.* (1994) and first included in the UN study referred to in footnote #33; here adjusted for full consistency with the definition of the core content of the right to adequate food in General Comment No. 12.

CESCR, General Comment No. 1, paragraphs 2-9). International monitoring is undertaken by the convention committees (treaty bodies) based on obligatory periodic national reports, often supplemented by alternative or 'shadow' reports from civil society, plus particular research. The aim is a constructive dialogue with governments about particular constraints and other reasons for non-compliance with legal provisions, with 'Concluding Observations' including recommendations on further steps by the government to redress or improve the situation by the time of the next periodic report. All material is openly accessible at the OHCHR's website.[37]

Figure 8. The 'Right to Food Matrix'

HFS attributes / Category of State obligations	**Household Food Security**				
	Adequate food			Sustainable supply of adequate food	Stable access to adequate food
	Dictary adequate (quantity, nutritional quality	Free from adverse substances and safe to eat	Acceptable within a given culture	Environmentally and economically sustainable food systems	Physical, social and economic access to food within the household's livelihood; not interfering with the enjoyment of other human rights
Respect					
Protect					
Fulfil **Facilitate**					
Provide					

Source: adjusted from Oshaug *et al.* (1994).

The function of UN Special Rapporteurs under the Human Rights Council is an additional special procedure to deepen the understanding of specific rights and corresponding State obligations, and further monitor and discuss countries' performance and problems at invited country visits. Of special interest here are the Special Rapporteur on the right to food (currently Professor Olivier De Schutter) and the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights (Dr. Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona). Their work and country visits reports can be consulted electronically.[38]

General principles for the conduct of human rights based processes in implementing economic, social and cultural rights

Starting in the early 2000s, a process evolved to develop principles for a human rights based approach to development issues and activities of various kind. A process led by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) led to the adoption in 2003 of a 'Statement of Common Understanding on Human Rights Based Approaches to Development Cooperation and Programming'.[39] In 2006 the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights issued 'Principles and Guidelines for a Human Rights Based Approach to Poverty Reduction Strategies'.[40] Both provide principles meant to guide the conduct of all human rights based policies and programme implementation. Drawing on these developments and on lessons learned during the implementation of the 2004 Right to Food

[37] www.ohchr.org.

[38] www.srfood.org and www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/PovertyStrategiesen.pdf.

[39] Developed in the context of UN Reform; published in UNICEF 'The State of the World's Children 2004'; accessible at www.unicef.org/sowc04/files/AnnexB.pdf.

[40] Accessible at: www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/PovertyStrategiesen.pdf.

Guidelines, the FAO Right to Food Unit proposed to use the following seven principles under the acronym PANTHER (for easy memorising): Participation, Accountability, Non-discrimination, Transparency, Human dignity, Empowerment and Respect for the rule of law; each principle also further annotated by FAO.[41]

Some of these principles become particularly relevant for the design and implementation of social protection measures for food security, and further amalgamation of right to food and right to social protection considerations can make the principles even more useful. Several countries have made use of all or some of these principles and even additional ones in recent legislation on food security; examples are Nicaragua, Guatemala and Brazil.

Remedies and accountability

General Comment No. 9 from the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Right deals with the domestic application of the Covenant.[42] It further deals with the question of remedies to right-holders in case of violation of a right, or non-compliance with its corresponding obligations.

> The right to an effective remedy need not be interpreted as always requiring a judicial remedy. Administrative remedies will, in many cases, be adequate and those living within the jurisdiction of a State party have a legitimate expectation, based on the principle of good faith, that all administrative authorities will take account of the requirements of the Covenant in their decision-making. Any such administrative remedies should be accessible, affordable, timely and effective. An ultimate right of judicial appeal from administrative procedures of this type would also often be appropriate. By the same token, there are some obligations, such as (but by no means limited to) those concerning non-discrimination, in relation to which the provision of some form of judicial remedy would seem indispensable in order to satisfy the requirements of the Covenant. In other words, whenever a Covenant right cannot be made fully effective without some role for the judiciary, judicial remedies are necessary. (GC9, paragraph 9)

Both General Comment No. 12 on the right to food and General Comment No. 19 on the right to social security address the right of persons or groups to have access to remedies in case of violations of these rights (see these for details). The provisions ensure the human right to remedies that become at the same time mechanisms for holding the State and its operative duty bearers accountable for their promises and practices, for example in implementing social protection entitlements. They open for legitimate *claims* by right-holders entitled to participate in a programme but who feel they have been unfairly excluded, or if the programme does not perform to expectations. The functioning of programme-related remedies is likely to be most effective where there is a national culture of remedies and accountability mechanisms more generally.

National legislation and the notion of a *framework law*

Article 2.1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights states:

> Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to take steps, individually and through international assistance and co-operation, especially economic and technical, to the maximum of its available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the rights recognized in the present Covenant by all appropriate means, *including particularly the adoption of legislative measures.*[43]

[41] www.fao.org/righttofood/publi12/rtf-fs2_en.pdf.

[42] www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/0/4ceb75c5492497d9802566d500516036?Opendocument.

[43] Emphasis added.

Different legislative measures are conceivable. One option is a 'framework law' regarding social protection for food security, or for social protection more generally. It is relatively new, but has received prominence and featured frequently in recent General Comments. Khoza (2005) explored the usefulness of such a law in realising the right to food, using the South African legal environment as a basis for discussion. He describes the general purpose of a framework law as "to get a systematically defined and complex process of implementation started … It serves as a point of departure in seeking loopholes or gaps in the current legislative frameworks ... It therefore provides for the development of policy and the specific legislation in certain areas of need" (Khoza, 2005, p. 194).

General Comment No. 12 says the following about the role of a legal underpinning of national strategies concerning the right to food.

> In implementing the country-specific strategies referred to above, States should set verifiable benchmarks for subsequent national and international monitoring. In this connection, States should consider the adoption of a *framework law* as a major instrument in the implementation of the national strategy concerning the right to food. The framework law should include provisions on its purpose; the targets or goals to be achieved and the time-frame to be set for the achievement of those targets; the means by which the purpose could be achieved described in broad terms, in particular the intended collaboration with civil society and the private sector and with international organizations; institutional responsibility for the process; and the national mechanisms for its monitoring, as well as possible recourse procedures. In developing the benchmarks and framework legislation, States parties should actively involve civil society organizations (GC12, paragraph 29).

The notion of framework legislation is also brought forward in General Comment No. 19 on the right to social security.

> States parties may find it advantageous to adopt framework legislation to implement the right to social security. Such legislation might include: (a) targets or goals to be attained and the time frame for their achievement; (b) the means by which the purpose could be achieved; (c) the intended collaboration with civil society, the private sector and international organizations; (d) institutional responsibility for the process; (e) national mechanisms for its monitoring; and (f) remedies and recourse procedures (GC19, paragraph 72).

The Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona, provides evidence from her experiences from visiting, upon invitation, a number of countries, regarding the significance of basing social protection measures in national legislation.

> "In those countries in which social protection programmes were already in place, protected by legislative or constitutional measures and constructed in accordance with a human rights framework, individuals and households most at risk of economic hardship enjoyed stronger protection of their rights and were thus able to rely on social protection mechanisms to mitigate the social and economic effects of the crises. This was the case in a number of Latin American countries that have well-developed and adequately supported social protection systems. Where no pre-existing human rights based social protection mechanisms were in place, States' investments in social protection were less able to respond to the effects of the economic downturn, although they still provided an important form of support to those most affected by the crises" (Sepúlveda and Nyst 2012).

Additional sources

For additional information, see for example: (1) the website of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights[44] for general sources about human rights in development, (2) the special website of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food,[45] and (3) the FAO Right to Food team's website.[46] The latter contains a wealth of resources, including a Knowledge Centre with, *inter alia,* a primer for interactive self-learning about the right to adequate food, a Toolbox containing elaborate tools for a range of implementation aspects, regular updates about mainstreaming the right to food into sub-national plans and strategies, and very much more.

[44] www.ohchr.org.

[45] www.srfood.org.

[46] www.fao.org/righttofood.

A2. The HLPE project cycle

The HLPE has been created in 2009 as part of the reform of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) to assess and analyze the current state of food security and nutrition and its underlying causes; provide scientific and knowledge-based analysis and advice on specific policy-relevant issues, utilizing existing high quality research, data and technical studies; Identify emerging issues, and help members prioritize future actions and attentions on key focal areas.

The HLPE receives its mandate from CFS and reports to it. It produces its reports, recommendations and advice independently from governmental positions, in order to inform and nourish the debate with comprehensive analysis and advice.

The HLPE has a two-tier structure:

- A Steering Committee composed of 15 internationally recognized experts in a variety of food security and nutrition related fields, appointed by the Bureau of CFS. HLPE Steering Committee members participate in their individual capacities, and not as representatives of their respective governments, institutions or organizations.
- Project Teams acting on a project specific basis, selected and managed by the Steering Committee to analyze/report on specific issues.

To ensure the scientific legitimacy and credibility of the process, as well as its transparency and openness to all forms of knowledge, the HLPE operates with very specific rules, agreed by the CFS.

The reports are produced by time-bound and topic-bound Project Teams, selected and appointed by the Steering Committee, following its guidance and under its oversight.

The project cycle for the reports, in spite of its being extremely time constrained, includes clearly defined stages separating the elaboration of the political question and request by the CFS, its scientific formulation by the Steering Committee, the work of a time bound and topic bound project team, external open consultations to enrich the knowledge base, an external scientific review (Figure 9).

The process promotes a scientific dialogue between the Steering Committee and the Project Team throughout the project cycle, with the experts in the HLPE Roster, and all concerned and interested knowledge-holders worldwide, thriving for the involvement of diverse scientific points of view.

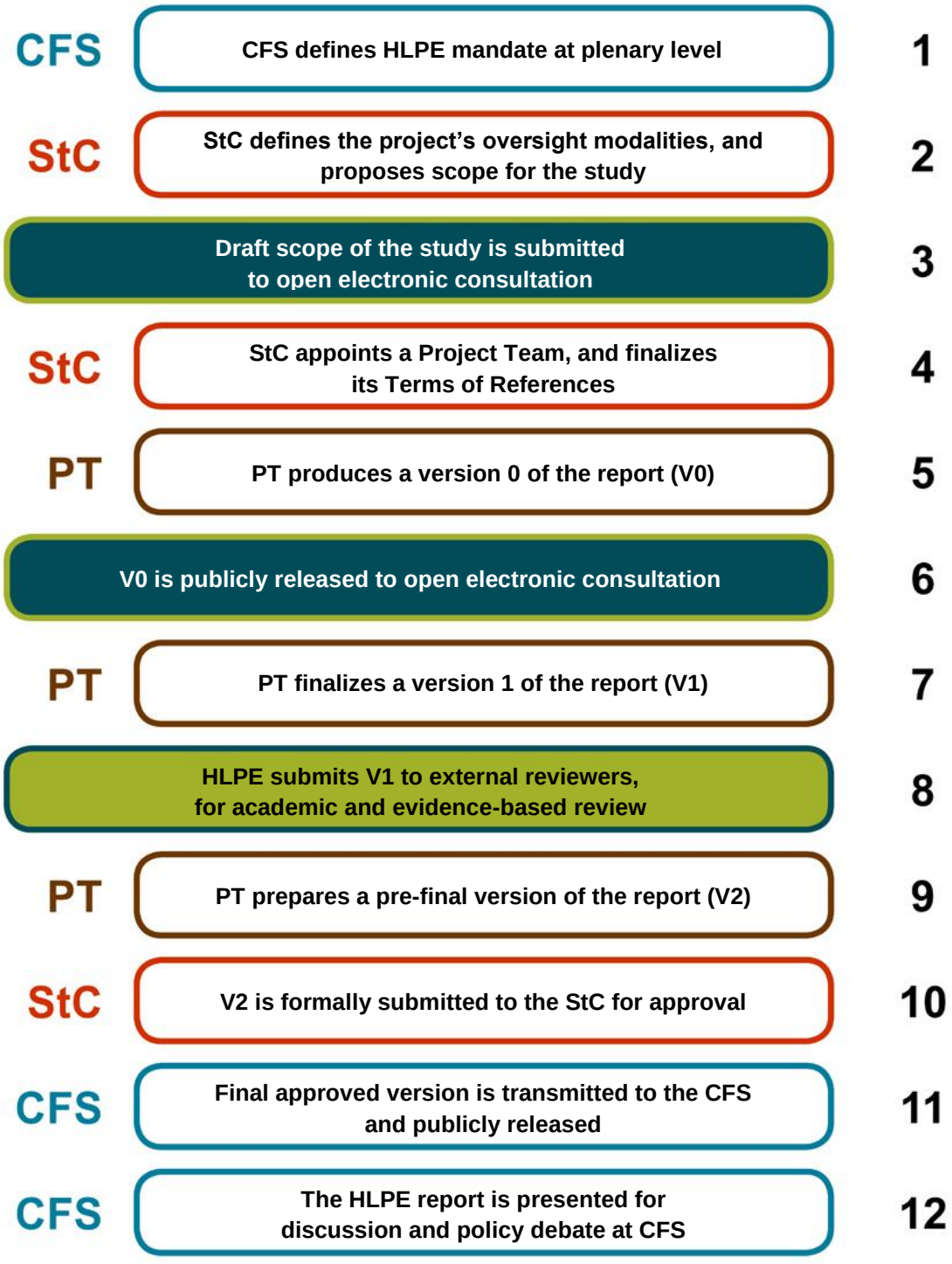
This is why the HLPE runs two external consultations per report: first, on the scope of the study; second, on a first draft (V0). This provides an opportunity to open the process to the input of all experts interested and towards the experts HLPE roster (there are currently 1200 of them), as well as to all concerned stakeholders. The input provided, including social knowledge, is then considered by the Project Team and enriches the knowledge base.

The draft report is submitted to independent evidence-based review. It is then finalized and discussed, leading to its approval by the Steering Committee during a face-to-face meeting.

The report approved by the Steering Committee is transmitted to the CFS, made public, and serves to inform discussions and debates in CFS.

All information regarding the HLPE, its process, former reports is available at the HLPE website: www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-hlpe.

Figure 9. HLPE project cycle



CFS Committee on World Food Security
HLPE High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition
StC HLPE Steering Committee
PT HLPE Project Team

Source: HLPE, 2012.

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CFS Committee on World Food Security

HLPE High Level Panel of Experts

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