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PROCEEDINGS

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[↗ www.fao.org/fsnforum/forum/discussions/social-protection-nutrition](http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/forum/discussions/social-protection-nutrition)

Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection Programs Around the World – What's being done and to what effect?

Collection of contributions received

in collaboration with



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Topic note

SecureNutrition and FAO's FSN Forum are partnering for the second time in order to host this online discussion in conjunction with the Global Forum on Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection Programs in Moscow, Russia (September 10th – 11th2015).

The purpose of this joint effort is to take stock of what countries around the world are doing in the area of nutrition-sensitive social protection – their successes and their challenges - and to provide a mechanism for stakeholders globally to engage in the dialogue and exchange experiences and lessons learned. The outcome of this online discussion will be used to enrich the discussions at the Global Forum and beyond. More information about the Global Forum is available at:

<https://www.securenutritionplatform.org/Lists/Events/DispForm.aspx?ID=300>

Key documents describing the linkages between nutrition and social protection that undergird the Global Forum are linked in the Resources section.

Background

Social protection programs are dynamic components of the budgets of most countries, and in low and middle income countries their share of government expenditures has been growing more rapidly compared to investments in other sectors. By the beginning of 2015 1.9 billion people were enrolled in social safety net programs in 136 countries.

The large number of programs reveals the complexity of social protection programs; an average low income country has 20 different social protection initiatives. Cash transfers alone have been credited as supporting between 0.75 billion and 1.0 billion people in low- and middle-income countries at the end of the first decade in this century; more than one quarter of the rural poor and roughly one fifth of the poor in urban areas received some cash assistance. Two countries had introduced conditional cash programs in 1997; that number grew to 27 by 2008 and to 64 by 2015, many of these running as pilots or otherwise localized projects. The number of countries in Africa with unconditional cash transfers doubled from 20 to 40 between 2010 and 2015.

Social protection expenditures cover both programs that can be classified as social assistance, or safety nets, as well as programs categorized as social insurance—including contributory pensions and unemployment assistance. Both types of social protection programs can contribute to increasing current consumption as well as long-term capital, thereby reducing poverty and improving social equity. They can also enhance human capital, and particularly nutrition.¹

Nutrition and Social Protection²

Nutritional status reflects the interplay of food consumption, access to health and sanitation, and nutrition knowledge and care practices. When child nutrition is improved the risk of mortality is reduced, future human capital is built, and productivity is increased. Yet, evidence shows that economic growth will only reduce malnutrition slowly. Investments in nutrition and early childhood development are therefore key determinants of long-term economic growth, and are increasingly recognized as integral components of a coherent social protection system to prevent the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

1 Nutrition and Social Protection: Background paper for the Global Forum on Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection Programs, Harold Alderman (Forthcoming, 2015)

2 Improving Nutrition through Multisectoral Approaches – Social Protection, World Bank (2013)

Social protection programs typically increase income (linked to food access), as well as influence the timing, and to a degree, the control of this income. Additionally, such programs may have greater impact on nutrition by fostering linkages with health services or with sanitation programs, and specifically through activities that are related to nutrition education or micronutrient supplementation. By taking into consideration the window of opportunity - the “1,000 days” from a woman’s pregnancy through her child’s 2nd birthday - for investing in nutrition, social protection programs can be targeted to enhance their impact on nutrition and lock-in future human capital.

As the number and complexity of social safety nets globally has grown over the past twenty years, so too has interest in making them work better for nutrition. Related initiatives by many development partners are underway around the world. Through the Global Forum and this online discussion, we aim to take stock of current nutrition-sensitive social protection programming, and understand what’s working, what’s not working, and what the challenges are in design and implementation.

Discussion Questions

We would like to hear your comments on the following guiding questions:

1. **Setting the stage:** Why are you interested in Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection? What is Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection? What makes a social protection intervention “nutrition-sensitive”?
2. **Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection Programs:** In your country, what nutrition problems are being tackled through social safety nets or other social protection instruments/programs? What type of program(s) are being implemented and at what scale?
3. **Nutrition-Sensitive Aspects:** To what extent is this/are these intervention(s) nutrition-sensitive? What makes it/them so? What is working well? What are some design and implementation challenges?
4. **Institutional arrangements:** Which agency (e.g. health, social welfare, a special agency) is in charge? By whom is it delivered: health workers, social protection agents, volunteers, special agents? Are there policies in place that either foster or hinder such cross-sectoral collaboration?
5. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Are you evaluating the effectiveness of these programs on nutrition outcomes? What have you found? What are the challenges? What are the criteria of success?

We look forward to your contributions to this online discussion and support to share it widely within you professional networks.

Lucy Bassett

Social Protection Specialist
World Bank

Ahmed Raza

Nutrition Specialist
FAO

Resources

Key documents describing the linkages between nutrition and social protection that undergird the Global Forum include:

[Malnutrition in Bangladesh: Maximizing Social Protection for Those Who are Most Vulnerable. Save the Children \(2015\)](#)

[Improving Nutrition through Multisectoral Approaches – Social Protection, World Bank \(2013\)](#)

[Social Protection for Food Security. A report by The High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security \(2012\)](#)

Nutrition and Social Protection: Background paper for the Global Forum on Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection Programs, Harold Alderman (Forthcoming, 2015)

FAO. 2015. Social Protection and Nutrition in the Food and Agriculture Sector. Suggestions for Programme Designers and Implementers on How to Maximize the Positive Impact of Social Protection Policies and Programmes on Nutrition. Rome, FAO

Contributions received

1. Dosse Sossouga, Amis des Etrangers au Togo (ADET), Togo

[Original contribution in French]

Nous ne connaissons pas un programme de ce genre au Togo. Il y a le ministère des affaires sociales : c'est tout. La nutrition-sensible n'est pas leur affaire.

[English translation]

We are not aware of any programme of this kind in Togo. There is the Ministry of Social Affairs: that's all. Nutrition-sensitive is not their business.

2. Claudio Schuftan, PHM, Viet Nam

Dear Lucy and Ahmed,

My serious concerns on the matter of this consultation all revolve around question 1.

1. Setting the stage: Why are you interested in Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection? What is Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection? What makes a social protection intervention "nutrition-sensitive"?

Your intro piece has, in my view, multiple flaws that will bias the consultation. Let me explain in the form of bullets.

You call for:

Making social safety nets and targeting work better. Safety nets have been designed to throw a crumb of bread to the needy without pulling them out of poverty. So we target 'the poor' (grr!) and do nothing about the system that perpetuates their poverty. Ultimately and dispassionately, it is all about avoiding social upheaval that will threaten the haves.

Social protection. To improve social protection, it would be nice to start asking the affected what they think needs to be done, no? This is a fundamental human rights principle... I feel the call may be bringing responses from top-down initiatives around the world which will mostly be localized with little replication prospects.

Stakeholders. (grr!) Isn't it high time we begin using claim holders and duty bearers instead?

Poverty reduction vs disparity reduction. When will we understand that the challenge is not poverty reduction, but disparity reduction? The pie is only so big; we do not need to make it grow with the same slicing; we must re-slice it far more equitably.... and nutrition-sensitive social protection will simply not do this.

Equity vs equality. You use equity where you should be using equality. Equity is a justice concept; equality is a human rights concept (and nutrition and social protection are HR issues).

Increasing productivity. For God's sake, we are trying to deal with a HR issue. We do NOT need an economic justification. Nutrition and social protection are a high priority, because HR are being violated. Point finale!

'Investments in nutrition and early childhood development are therefore (therefore?) key determinants of long term economic growth'. Investing in nutrition is a HR priority, no more, no less. Forget the economic growth justification. Growth for what? for more 99/1? For more depletion of natural resources and environmental degradation and precipitating climate change? We simply have to stop using this fallacious argument.

'Programs targeted (?? see above) to enhance their impact on nutrition and lock in future human capital'. Ayayay! More of the same.... Human capital is such a neoliberal term. What we need is to lock-in is the respect and fulfillment of, in this case, the human right to nutrition and the human right to social protection.

Activities related to nutrition education and micronutrient supplementation... Nutrition education to teach people what they cannot afford? We have over 4 decades of negative experiences on this. Micronutrient supplementation is a darling of donors....it does not require addressing the thorny issue of the political roots of malnutrition as stunting more does.

I hope this contributes early-on to guide the agenda of the consultation. If this perspective is not brought up in Moscow, we may as well stay in our ivory towers.

Claudio in Ho Chi Minh City

3. Mohammad Jafar Emal, IFAD/RMLSP/MAIL, Afghanistan

Dear FSN-Moderator,

Attached please find an article on Innovative Backyard Poultry Development for increased assets, income and nutrition, which is in line with "Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection Programs Around the World – What's being done and to what effect?."

Best regards

<http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/sites/default/files/resources/Innovative%20backyard%20poltry.pdf>

4. Jane Sherman, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, Italy

Though posts have been few so far, we have had a really interesting spread on this really interesting subject, and I have appreciated all of them very much. The pictures of the children and the eggs were especially nice - thank you, Dr Emal, and thank you for telling us a tale where the eggs went into the family meals and not just to the market.

Social security schemes seem to be a foundation stone of social democracy and I don't see a lot of difference from social protection schemes (maybe someone can correct me). However, I'm bypassing the question of whether such strategies should be put in place by governments to redress inequity. I am also risking the wrath of Claudio Schuftan by flying the flag for food education, which in my vision is everyone's birthright, especially in view of the nutrition transition and the present power of Big Food.

Bringing social protection and food education together, I would like to raise three points:

The first, which now has quite a lot of supporting evidence, is that many interventions aiming at increasing food security (including social protection handouts, food vouchers, income generation, agricultural projects etc.) fail to have a significant impact on nutrition status because they simply enhance existing inadequate dietary profiles and patterns of household expenditure. Adding a little food education to the mix can significantly tilt the outcomes of such actions towards better family diet. The best-known case in social protection is probably that of SNAP in the USA, which found it necessary to create SNAP-ED to introduce the missing education component.

The second is about how we measure nutrition status. In one major social protection scheme the indicator selected was dietary diversity. This was shown to be increased by regular cash handouts, mainly because most households enjoyed their higher income by eating more meat. This was all to the

good, but they did not at the same time eat more fruit and vegetables, in which their diet was also deficient, and which were equally important to improving nutrition status, nor was dietary varied assessed. Meat generally has status in poor communities and vegetables do not, while fruit is often regarded as a non-food, nice but not necessary. I am asking if our indicators are sufficiently sensitive to the concept of a good diet.

My third question is *Why are we not hearing from the social protection people?*

Jane Sherman, nutrition education consultant, FAO

5. Lucy Bassett, World Bank, United States of America and facilitator of the discussion

Dear all,

Many thanks to our early contributors. I am just back from Guatemala, and was looking first-hand into how to deliver nutrition services to the most vulnerable. Some of what is discussed resonates already.

Inherent to many discussions of social protection are issues around human rights, respect, and equity. Who is included? Under what criteria? In what locations? Do the programs fundamentally impact their dignity? Should we even *need* programs?

In fact, the scope of this conversation is at its core about experience, and the opportunity here through the FSN Forum and in-person in Moscow is to examine how we can collectively increase quality of life across multiple fronts. Thanks for the comments on food education and measurement of nutrition outcomes, which are examples of things we need to think about in more detail.

These conversations, and the questions included here, reflect an identified need to link nutrition and social protection programs. We often discuss ways to 'reduce the equity gap', and this is one of them; what we anticipated when putting this discussion together, is a way to compare, contrast, and share ways that address the roots of malnutrition better than has been done. There is an old proverb saying, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." While the FSN Forum may not be a channel reaching directly to those affected by the programming, it is a powerful tool to reach many outside the 'ivory towers' who know how to improve programming. We are convening as a global community, taking a small slice of a much larger issue, and pushing forward together.

We look forward to remaining weeks of this discussion (and hope to see more contributions from social protection experts)!

6. Kuruppacharil V.Peter, World Noni Research Foundation, India

The school mid day meal scheme is a powerful tool for nutrition security and child literacy. In many of the states in India like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh, the school mid day scheme has attracted both male and female children to schools for education. In a few states like Gujarat milk is included. In Tamil Nadu one egg /day is served. Pulses are invariably served.

Many socially responsible NGO s have programmes to feed homeless, aged and orphans. Much more has to be done in view of the escalating population. Hidden hunger due to micro-nutrient deficiency is a matter of concern. Promotion of nutrition garden with one tree of drum stick and curry leaf will go a long way in making a household self sufficient in nutrition.

Recently I compiled a book titled "Horticulture Crops for Nutrition Security" published by NIPA New Delhi (www.bookfactoryindia.com) carrying chapters on food and nutrition. Prof. M S Swaminathan

Father of Green Revolution in India made the statement " There is a horticultural remedy for every nutritional malady".

7. Demetrio Miguel Castillo, Universidad Experimental Felix Adam, Dominican Republic

Los programas de protección social hay que manejarlos con sumo cuidado pues en ellos se filtran una serie de elementos e incluso familias completas que reciben la protección, aun estando fuera del país de origen, esto a la larga crea una carga económica al presupuesto del estado y deja fuera muchos que realmente lo necesitan. Si analizamos con detenimiento vemos que ayudas sociales destinadas a la niñez van a manos política partidarias. Y otras ayudas sociales destinadas a ancianos y convalecientes no llegan a los estratos realmente necesitados. Monitorear esas ayudas de parte de organizaciones no gubernamentales responsables debe ser tarea del estado.

8. Kuruppacharil V.Peter, World Noni Research Foundation, India

Family Farming was the theme propagated by UN and many countries including India. The whole year 2014 was devoted and many conferences held to focus on Family farming as a way for empowering families with nutritive food, indirect employment, residue free organic food and above all family peace resulting from collective farm operations. In Kerala alone there are 60 million homesteads and back yard farming is an established practice passed over generations. Tuber crops like yams and cassava saved families from famine due to drought and flood. Leaf vegetables -indigenous-provided needed fibres and minerals to the diet.

A detailed chapter on Economics of Family Farming is attached.

http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/sites/default/files/resources/Chapter-3_0.pdf

The chapter is from the book HORTICULTURE FOR NUTRITION SECURITY published by New India Publishing Agency New Delhi. Preambles are policy papers published by FAO, National Academy of Agricultural Sciences New Delhi and Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi. Copies are available at: newindiapublishingagency@gmail.com

<http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/sites/default/files/resources/FAMILY%20FARMING-1%281%29.doc>

9. Ahmed Raza, FAO, Italy and facilitator of the discussion

Dear participants,

Thank you for sharing your valuable experiences and thoughts on the topic.

At its core the concept of Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection embraces the notion of a multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach, and in numerous cases social protection, when linked with other development interventions – particularly in the areas of agriculture and food security, can lead to better nutrition outcomes. To this end, institutional arrangements at all levels of the policy sphere hold key importance. Building on the recent discussion posts, it is interesting to explore how such arrangements, in different contexts, have been able to incorporate the unique role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and other relevant partners. The following questions on the programmatic and implementation side also become relevant: how can synergies across sectors be best realized? Which sectors (as well as agencies and ministries) in this regard are significant?

The meeting in Moscow next week aims to gather experts and policy makers from a wide range of sectors, such as health, labour, food security, agriculture and rural services – to name a few, to deliberate on the challenges and opportunities associated with the design and implementation of Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection.

We look forward to hearing about your experiences in the coming days.

Ahmed Raza

Nutrition Specialist

FAO

10. Shewli Kumar, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, India

To respond to each of the questions I would need to reframe the way we look at nutrition within present situation in India. Land as a resource for the poor, forest dwellers and excluded communities like Dalits need to be reassured and redistributed within the rights framework. The current high levels of malnutrition is an outcome of denial of land and forest rights, which are guaranteed by law, yet not given in practice, lack of attention to sustainable agriculture and multi-cropping practices within traditional agricultural practices.

In India the hard fought negotiations to ensure adequate food to the poor has been ensured under the National Food Security Act, however there are a multiplicity of programmes for health care and a closer look at them show less of rights and more of charity through inclusion of private players in public health processes. Hence, making right to adequate health care as a public good and right of all citizens is a must. The discourse from charity to rights is imperative for such basic services and I am not sure if the Social Protection floors ensure the same. It's like taking away from one hand and giving in charity from another with a patronizing and top-down approach.

Several laws like the SEZ Act in India take away fertile land from farmers and of course the landless workers on farms are not counted at all. So more farmers are being diverted from land in a quiet and insidious manner. Since the government may not provide adequate support prices for the agricultural produce more farmers especially young farmers are selling land as its not profitable for them. Hence crop insurance, insurance against climatic changes and disasters need to be urgently introduced through state funded and monitored programmes. The private insurance companies are not covered under accountability mechanisms hence often they resort to devious tactics for return of loans etc.

Two critical programmes for nutrition are the Integrated Child Development Scheme (universal in nature) and the Mid-day meal scheme. Both have shown good possibilities for dealing with nutrition delivery. However there has been strong budget cuts in both schemes in the new budget. And the monitoring and accountability mechanisms are weak in several parts of the country. Also the catch in most of these schemes is the dependence on delivery on resource poor, gender discriminated women from the local communities who receive a pittance with regard to their salaries and honorariums. All evaluations tend to focus on their roles instead of locating power hierarchies where salaries are higher for those who work the least within the system.

Critical to ensuring nutrition of communities and people is the adoption of a rights-based approach wherein they are empowered with resources through land, livelihoods and social security, which means that countries work towards a 'development with equity' rather than 'growth as development.'

11. Lal Manavado, University of Oslo affiliate, Norway

On Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection

My point of departure is quite simple; social protection becomes a need when some members of a society are unjustifiably denied of the possibility of their satisfying one or more of man's six fundamental needs with reference to their own cultural norms. While these needs are universal for all cultures, how they are satisfied is subject to cultural variation. One of these fundamental needs is nutrition.

Therefore, holistic social protection entails that when necessary, ensuring that the members of a social group are enabled adequately to meet their nutritional needs with reference to their own cultural norms in a way that does not harm anyone or our shared habitat.

A group specific mechanism to enable a social group to meet their nutritional needs that entails harm to some other group or to our habitat is unacceptable for obvious reasons. One may legitimately call them ethico-pragmatic reasons, respect of which in the long run, is essential for the continued existence of the human race.

Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection then, represents undertaking an appropriate set of actions that would enable a social group adequately to meet its nutritional needs with reference to its own cultural norms in a manner that entails no harm to anyone or our environment.

The current failure to holistically address the question, what makes nutrition sensitivity a critical component of social protection intervention, has led to an unprecedented degree of urban and rural misery in Asia, Africa and in Americas. Indeed, this is a serious charge, and I shall try to justify my position with a few examples from real life that can be easily confirmed.

Let me begin by stating the obvious; unless an appropriate and adequate supply of affordable food is available to the people, neither their sound economic status nor their enjoyment of human rights can prevent them from either being malnourished or inappropriately nourished. The former results in retarded mental capacity, deficiency diseases and other developmental problems, while the latter additionally leads to obesity and its well-known consequences.

It is vital to understand that social protection endeavours that are not nutrition-sensitive do more harm than good in the long run not only to the already deprived social groups, but also those who are about to enter their midst. Leaving aside the obvious ethico-pragmatic requirements any suitable social protection effort should meet, I will concentrate on the what constitutes the appropriateness, adequacy, and the availability of the nutritional component of social protection.

APPROPRIATENESS:

A significant part of the current nutritional habits of a social group is a product of a long evolution with reference to the group's geographic location, climate, local flora and fauna on the one side, and the people's nutritional needs on the other which are dependent on their energy and growth needs. This is an undisputable physio-biological fact. Over a long period of time, how those nutritional needs are met under those conditions get embodied as the food culture of that group.

Naturally, food culture will change over time as the conditions change, but this is a slow natural process. It is reflected in the agricultural products of a group. These products are able to satisfy both the taste and the nutritional needs of its members, provided an adequate supply of those are at their disposal at reasonable prices.

Often indeed those products come from the traditional farmers who are distributed around larger population centres (eg. Former southern Angola). The political ploy of raising people's expectations to an impossible level, military conflicts of every kind, climatic changes injurious to agriculture, usury, and over-population have drastically reduced the rural agricultural production in many areas of

southern Africa and some areas of Asia. At the same time, any one or a combination of those factors have resulted in huge and continuous migration of the poor to the cities (eg. Consider the continuing growth of shanty towns around the former 'townships of South Africa and around cities in Angola).

For the sake of balance, let me also note that a similar growth slums obtain within and around the Indian cities like Bombay supposed to be in the throes of an economic 'miracle'. It seems that no one knew about the poverty stricken slums around New Orleans until they were submerged under water in the aftermath of a cyclone a few years ago and the slum dwellers emerged in their thousands. All these people have something in common, viz., they are ill-nourished and their ability to work and learn is considerably reduced owing to their inability to meet their nutritional needs adequately. Moreover, their susceptibility to diseases is significantly higher than their national average.

So, how to ensure appropriateness of social protection with reference to nutrition? First of all, it is essential to re-populate the already depopulated rural areas with agriculturalists trained to produce the foods of the country or the area concerned. This may require education and training, equipment, appropriate seed and livestock, and financial incentives as well as an adequate infrastructure including storage and cheap transport, not magnetic levitation and fancy air ports for tourists.

Now to the other side of the coin, i.e., those who are to be protected. Monetary help may enable them to buy food in the slum shops, but paradoxically enough, it is very expensive, its quality is poor to bad, and very often, it takes the form of some food foreign to the people. The solution seems to be the establishment of suitable outlets in deprived areas where the produce of their environs may be bought at reasonable prices. But, I do not know how this may be achieved for the law and order situation in some such areas would not allow it unless it is improved rapidly and effectively.

One of the greatest obstacles to real progress and a huge depopulator of rural areas leading to an ever growing need for social protection in under-developed countries is rogue aid provided by China, India, Russian Federation, etc. Evil effects of Chinese aid is brilliantly visible in southern Angola where Chinese capital and Chinese prisoners work to build tourist facilities and prestige projects. As a result, the Angolan capital has an immense population of poorest of the poor running into several millions. I think unless the caring nations intervene to halt rogue aid, it will become increasingly difficult to provide any social protection to many millions in the recipient countries.

My reason for this seemingly off-the-topic comment is quite simple. If the number of people who require social protection should continue to increase at the present rate, it is difficult to see how a country could produce enough appropriate food stuffs to meet their nutritional needs. It is often those who are engaged in agriculture who migrate into cities in search of a 'better life'.

I have touched on food production and equally important, its equitable distribution. Apart from that, it is necessary that every development initiative does not entail a reduction in the number of agricultural workers, nor yet in the area of the arable land. Ideally, such an endeavour ought to provide either a direct or an indirect incentive to an increase in both, especially when it is not directly concerned with agriculture.

It would be wise to discourage capital intensive industrialized agriculture, particularly where the need for social protection is acute, for it renders many unemployed who add to the growing numbers of those who require social protection. Its opposite, viz., practical encouragement of small farming involving traditional crops could not only reduce the increase in the number of those who need social protection, but it could also increase our ability to take care of the nutritional aspect of that help as well as support the bio-diversity in food crops and livestock.

I shall now sum up some means of increasing the nutrition sensitivity of social protection interventions and what may be done to make sure that they will not lead to an increase in the numbers who require them.

1. Incorporate suitable agricultural education/training programmes and provision of start capital/material packages in social protection initiatives.
2. Include help to rural farmers and active expansion of small farming, and an equitable distribution of agricultural produce as an integral part of national development.
3. Help to establish and run agricultural cooperatives in rural and semi-rural areas, preferably via less formal but more transparent mechanisms.
4. Distributed and non-intrusive industrial development, which may provide employment without affecting the manpower needs of the vital agriculture sector.
5. Discourage 'development schemes' that uproots rural populations, loss of arable land, require cheap but often inappropriate food imports, and intrusive and mendacious food and drink advertising.
6. Some international mechanism to halt rogue development aid, possibly by giving world-wide publicity to its visible harmful effects.
7. The most difficult, viz., tolerably good governance and its actual use, especially with respect to agriculture, actively enforced labour laws, and holistic policy formulation and implementation.

Adequacy:

Adequacy of an appropriate food supply is an individual issue, dependent on the the particular nutritional needs of a given individual, which in turn depends on one's age, sex, specific energy and growth needs at a given time, etc. In generalising on food needs, it would be salutary to remember these variations rather than to engage in mechanical thinking and depend on caloric content of food items. At the same time, it would be wise to recall that what constitutes a balanced diet has to be determined with respect to the variations mentioned above for there can never be a universal balanced diet unless we are mass produced to a set of fixed specifications.

Affordability:

My final comments here are to underline the importance of ensuring an affordable supply of appropriate foods for those who require social protection. Monetary help can hardly ensure anything more than a starvation diet to the needy unless we ensure the availability of affordable food. It is therefore essential that guidelines 1-7 above are observed both by the general development activities, and the broader social protection endeavors.

Best wishes!

Lal Manavado.

12. Mebit Kebede Jhpiego, Ethiopia

Dear members,

This is to share the experience that I thought to be very important.

"Ethiopian Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP), Social Protection Nutrition Sensitive intervention"

The Government of Ethiopia has developed several policies, plans and strategies with a view to progressively fulfil constitutional rights of the nation. Among many, food security program can be mentioned as one major strategy which enable the vulnerable community to strive to fulfil their right

to food. The Ethiopian Food Security Program consists of the Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP), Household Asset Building Program (HABP), the Voluntary Resettlement Program and the Complementary Community Investment Program (CCI).

The Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) is a development-oriented social protection program launched in Ethiopia in 2005. PSNP is aimed at enabling the rural poor facing chronic food insecurity to resist shocks, create assets and become food self-sufficient. PSNP provides multi-annual predictable transfers, as food, cash or a combination of both, to help chronically food insecure people survive food deficit periods and avoid depleting their productive assets while attempting to meet their basic food requirements. The combination of cash and food transfers is based on season and need, with food given primarily in the lean season between June and August. Vulnerable households receive six months of assistance annually to protect them from acute food insecurity.

Read the full attached document to see the contribution of PSNP as a nutrition sensitive social protection intervention to reduce malnutrition in Ethiopia.

<http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/sites/default/files/resources/Ethiopian%20Productive%20Safety%20Net%20Program.docx>

13. Manuel Moya, International Pediatric Association. TAG on Nutrition, Spain

Dear Ms Basset, Dear Mr Raza,

Below are my comments on the suggested five questions, which certainly approach the widespread problem of nutrition-sensitive issues.

Setting the stage: Because of my position of Chair of the Technical Advisory Group on Nutrition of the International Pediatric Association (IPA) nutrition-sensitive issues are of main concern and activity. We were able to detect in LMIC the coexistence of undernutrition and increasing overweight. The last situation went unrecognized by the family and health care and we think it was related to inappropriate promotion of infant formula feeding in the first year of life and later on the dense caloric food consumption.

Nutrition-sensitive programs: In the Sub-Saharan countries we couldn't detect the presence of such programs in the places where the health care provider cared/ listened the child and mother. Programs are certainly in the high health offices but not at this important step.

Nutrition sensitive aspects: Food industry with its marketing actions among other better known, are using new ways such as the pseudoscientific information for promoting their products.

Institutional arrangements: We were not able to find the actors from any agency for improving Nutrition-sensitive programs whose results are clearly expressed in the last para of your Digest N° 1185 of 26 August. This empty space is a target for marketing people.

Monitoring and evaluation: Monitoring is difficult because health care providers are not enough motivated, for doing this extra work. Our impression is that Health Authorities are more concerned with acute situation, mainly infectious diseases. Evaluation is more difficult even. We tried a simple program for identifying houses with under/ overweight and giving very basic food information, our feedback was disappointing.

In conclusion: In our opinion the situation is improving concerning underweight (food access and sanitation) but food education and very basic nutritional principles goes clearly behind. Education should be focused on health care providers but to the general population specially mothers. The open question is: Who is going to plan and deliver this knowledge to this target population?

Should you require additional information, please let me know

With my kindest regards

Manuel Moya

Catedrático E/ E Professor & Head
Chair of the Technical Advisory Group on Nutrition of International Pediatric Association (IPA)
Editor in Chief of IPA Newsletter
Board of Directors of IPA Foundation
Vice-President of European Pediatric Association
Academician of the Real Academia de Medicina
Pediatric Dept. University Miguel Hernández
Ctra Valencia s/n. 03550 S Juan. Alicante. Spain

14. Ellen Anneliese Muehlhoff, FAO, Italy

Dear members,

A recent study on a social protection scheme in Bangladesh showed important evidence that nutrition education is a key element in cash delivery programs which aim to have an impact on child nutrition.

The study has not been published yet but preliminary findings are available at <https://www.wfp.org/news/news-release/safety-nets-cash-nutrition-education-has-greatest-impact-child-nutrition>

Ellen

15. Wajid Pirzada, SAFWCO Foundation, Pakistan

It is a common knowledge that: 1. the poorest of the poor spend most of their earning on food; 2. the inflation, and for that matter food inflation, being a sort of regressive tax, hurts the poor the most.

Given this, social protection programmes need to help improve the quality & safety of food s/he consumes, which is generally compromised for the reason of low income sources. Control of food inflation and provision of fortified food and supplements for lactating & pregnant mothers and children under 5 can help this object.

Dr. Wajid Pirzada

Executive Director

SAFWCO Foundation, (www.safwcofoundation.org)

Islamabad, Pakistan.

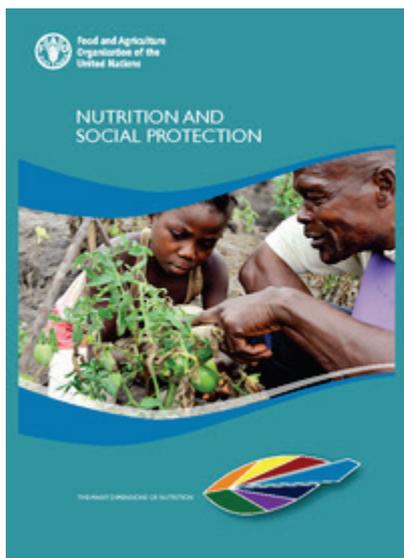
16. Chiara Deligia, communication expert, FAO, Italy

Dear participants,

I am pleased to share the newly released paper on "[Nutrition and social protection](#)", which presents each social protection instrument and describes how its impact on nutrition can be enhanced. The paper is complete with case studies and analysis of major challenges and windows of opportunity.

Given its importance for improving food and nutrition security, FAO has made social protection one of its corporate priorities. Social protection is one of the pillars of FAO's Strategic Objective "Reduce Rural Poverty", and will be the central theme of this year's World Food Day and of FAO's flagship report on the State of Food and Agriculture 2015.

The paper *Nutrition and social protection* is the result of a collaborative effort between the FAO Nutrition Division and Social Protection Division. It is written for policy makers and project managers working on areas related to nutrition and social protection, and aims to provide practical and operational suggestions to enhance the nutritional impact of social protection policies and programmes.



Abstract:

This publication presents the linkages and synergies between social protection and nutrition in the food and agriculture sector and proposes recommendations for maximizing the nutritional impact of social protection programmes. The target audience includes professionals working in social protection who wish to know more about how nutrition relates to their work, as well as nutrition experts who wish to know how social protection can contribute to improving nutrition.

<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4819e.pdf>

17. Lucy Bassett, World Bank, United States of America and facilitator of the discussion

Dear all,

Thanks for all the interesting comments and contributions that have been posted over the past several days. I trust the conference is off to an excellent start and hope that all of you participating are enjoying the conversations and benefiting from the information exchange.

I really appreciate the resources that people have shared (i.e. FAO paper, Nutrition and Social Protection; Bangladesh study on CCT plus nutrition education; etc.), which provide some concrete ideas about how to design nutritionally-impactful social protection programs and what works. Similarly, the examples of nutrition-sensitive social protection programs in action (Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Program and India's Integrated Child Development and mid-day meal schemes)

give a flavor of different approaches to achieving improved nutrition in the context of social protection, as well as some of the challenges (human resources, ensuring budget availability, monitoring and accountability, etc.).

It is interesting to see some common themes emerging in the comments. For example, several of you raise the importance of the quality, safety, and cultural appropriateness of food. While this can be addressed in part through nutrition education and training, commenters point out that complementary support and/or policies must be present to ensure sustained improvement. These could be things like land rights, and appropriate agricultural support like crop insurance, equipment, appropriate seed and livestock, and financial incentives as well as an adequate infrastructure. Several of you also emphasize the importance of supporting family farming as part of nutrition-sensitive social protection.

Another theme that comes out is that of institutional arrangements, roles, and responsibilities. Someone suggests that the state should play a role in monitoring NGO-provided services. Another questions how related ministries (e.g. health) will be motivated to monitor nutrition outcomes coming through social protection. The book, [Working Multisectorally in Nutrition: Principles, Practices, and Case Studies](#), may provide some ideas on that topic.

I am curious to see what other examples of successful or promising nutrition-sensitive social protection endeavors people put forth after participating in the conference. It may be helpful to think of what can be achieved in different phases in a particular country, especially for those that do not have anything in place yet. What could be a feasible and valuable first step?

I look forward to hearing more from you in the coming days.

--Lucy Bassett

18. Mathilde Savy, IRD (Institut de Recherche pour le Développement), France

Dear Members,

Just to share our thoughts and experience on the topic – mainly in West Africa where we are working:

The need to rigorously evaluate nutrition-sensitive social protection programs is pressing not only to accumulate evidence concerning the impact and cost-effectiveness of such programs but also for learning i.e. to improve the design of future programs and to uncover impact pathways (i.e. to better understand what factors contribute to an impact). These learning aspects should be an integral part of any evaluation as they are essential for the successful scale up and replication of programs. Donors and program implementers should also be more aware that a meaningful impact evaluation implies its conception at the onset of a program and an interest in impact beyond primary indicators.

We are collaborating with IFPRI (International Food Policy Research Institute) on a large applied research program aiming to evaluate and strengthen social transfer programs which objective is to improve food and nutrition security in West Africa (see the one-pager concept note). We are using experimental or quasi-experimental methods, including randomized design and valid comparison groups where appropriate; we also use mixed methods (a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection) to document if, why and how the impact is achieved (or not).

Impact and process evaluation of three cash transfer programs are underway in Mali and Togo:

1. SNACK (Santé Nutritionnelle à Assise Communautaire à Kayes) project (WFP)
2. Jigiséméjiri (Malian Government and the World Bank)

3. Pilot cash transfer project in Kara and Savanes regions, north Togo (Togolese government, Unicef, World Bank)

Results are not available yet (endline survey to be conducted in 2016 and 2017) but we will certainly share these when the time comes. We do hope that our work will contribute to provide the evidence needed for rational choices concerning social transfer program design(s) adapted to specific contexts and to motivate governments to integrate such interventions into comprehensive national social protection policies.

Dr Mathilde Savy, on behalf of IRD/IFPRI teams

[http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/sites/default/files/resources/Concept Note Onepager Evaluative Research Social Transfers WestAfrica IRD IFPRI Nov2012.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/sites/default/files/resources/Concept%20Note%20Onepager%20Evaluative%20Research%20Social%20Transfers%20WestAfrica%20IRD%20IFPRI%20Nov2012.pdf)

19. Lalita Bhattacharjee, FAO, Bangladesh

Dear members,

I would like to follow up to Ellen's post regarding the study on Bangladesh.

Social protection programs, if designed and implemented properly, can have significant impacts on food and nutrition security, agricultural productivity and rural development. Synergy between agriculture and social protection is considered necessary for reducing rural poverty and vulnerability.

As mentioned in the Bangladesh case, the Transfer Modality Research Initiative (TMRI), a joint effort between WFP, IFPRI and the Government of Bangladesh, showed that all social transfers' modalities (food and cash) caused meaningful improvements in nearly all measures of consumption (i.e. expenditure on food and nonfood consumption, calorie intake, and diet quality). However, inclusion of nutrition behavior change communication (BCC) along with the transfers determined considerably larger improvements than transfer alone. In particular, cash transfers + nutrition BCC had a larger impact on diet quality (in terms of food consumption score) and was the only modality to significantly reduce child stunting. Moreover, nutrition BCC also had a positive impact on women empowerment and social status.

These outcomes provide useful lessons for policy attention and information on how to make the best use of social protection programmes to improve nutrition. The "Monitoring Report 2015 of the National Food Policy Plan of Action and the Country Investment Plan for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition" considered the results of the study particularly relevant for the implementation of the recent National Social Protection Strategy and recommended to use them to identify the types of social protection interventions to be implemented at country level.

I trust the meeting in Moscow will help in drawing up further evidence on the best social protection programmes and implementation modalities to improve food security and nutrition of the vulnerable populations for whom it is most intended.

Kind regards,

Lalita

Lalita Bhattacharjee, PhD

Nutritionist and Officer in Charge, Meeting the Undernutrition Challenge –MUCH

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Bangladesh

20. Meena Fernandes, Imperial College London, United Kingdom

Dear participants,

It is great to see reference in the discussion to India's Mid-Day Meal Scheme, which is the largest school feeding program in the world. Almost every country has a government-led program making it one of the most common nutrition-sensitive safety net tools globally. Adolescent girls may be reached through this intervention, and the nutritional status of the next generation may also be affected.

In Ghana, the Partnership for Child Development (PCD), has worked closely with the Ministries of Local Government, Health and Agriculture to promote the delivery of school feeding rations that provide 30% RDA of energy and key nutrients such as iron through locally produced, diverse foods. The linkages with local agriculture along with the provision of nutrition education and behavioural change communication can amplify the program's social protection and nutrition benefits to the community. The recognition of school feeding as a social protection tool in Ghana is reflected in the recent reorganization placing the program in the Ministry of Social Protection.

Your question on M&E is intriguing and the comments from Matilde are insightful. While it is important to monitor the effectiveness on nutrition, this potential is very much contingent on the quality of implementation. Thus it is critical for M&E to include robust process indicators and appropriate targets, and these may be specific to the actual program. There is a strong need to support governments develop strong M&E systems that can enhance the delivery of effective programming.

Meena Fernandes, Senior Research Advisor

Getrude Anase-Baiden, Ghana Programmes Manager

Partnership for Child Development, Imperial College London

21. Renata Mirulla, FAO, Italy

Dear FSN Forum members,

This UNICEF paper on cash transfers and child nutrition provides a comprehensive overview of the impacts of cash transfer programmes on child nutrition: while cash transfers have a positive role in increasing resources for food, health and care, the evidence is mixed with respect to whether these programmes positively impact growth-related outcomes among children.

This paper reinforces the message coming from the Bangladesh study that cash transfers alone are probably not enough to ensure improvements in child nutrition. If cash transfers are delivered along with interventions on nutrition education, behaviour communication, and supply side interventions that improve access and quality of health services there are greater chances to achieve impacts on child nutrition.

I look forward to hear the outcomes from the Moscow meeting last week, where nutrition-sensitive social protection programmes have been discussed and thanks to Lalita for sharing this paper.

Renata

<http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/sites/default/files/resources/Cash%20transfers%20and%20child%20nutrition.pdf>

22. Theogene Dusingizimana, Kigali Institute of Science and Technology, Rwanda

Although the deadline has passed, my quick comment, based on Rwanda's experience is that nutrition-sensitive social protection programmes are highly dynamic and require continuous and intense decision-making processes to ensure sustainability. Therefore, robust decision-support tools for such programmes are critical for successful management and decision-making.

For this reason, I am working on a proposal that seeks to develop a decision-support tool that could be used in a nutrition-sensitive social protection programme while selecting beneficiaries and collecting food and nutrition security indicators to ensure positive impact of the programme on nutrition status of beneficiaries. I will use the Rwandan One Cow Per Poor Family Program as a case study.

Regards,

Theogene

Théogène Dusingizimana

Assistant Lecturer

University of Rwanda

23. Florence Egal, Food Security and Nutrition expert, Italy

Way too late, but...

I facilitated a one and a half day session on household food security and nutrition during a summer school on sustainable mountain development at the end of June. Part of this was group work and one of the groups decided to work on a valley in the Peruvian Andes. Their diagnosis (which caught me by surprise) was that the local economy was undermined by the Conditional Cash Transfer programme: people would stop buying locally and spent their cash in the local supermarket (which was doing great :-)). So no good for local farmers (who may have to apply sooner or later to the programme) and no good for consumers (not sure shifting from local foods to supermarket food is necessarily the healthy choice).

This was clearly anecdotal. Has any research been carried out to look at the impact of social protection programmes on food practices and diets?

Florence

24. Alka Awasthi, consultant, India

About half of the deaths of children under the age of 5 in the country can be attributed to nutrition related disorders. Besides the well-known Mid Day Meal for schoolchildren, there are many other initiatives that seek to address nutritional security. India has a large dairy cooperative sector and many dairies are supplying small packets of flavoured milk to schoolchildren, mainly in tribal dominated areas. This helps to improve the nutritional status of children. Together with the Mid Day Meal such nutrition programs are also known to improve school attendance.

Recently, the NDDB (National Dairy Development Board), through the NDDB Foundation for Nutrition has announced a 'Gift Milk Program'. This program a major initiative to provide 'A Glass of Milk to Every Child' to address nutrition among children across India by using its vast network of cooperatives. The program provide a transparent electronic platform to connect individuals and corporate as donors in the Initiative.