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## Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition

### TOPIC NOTE

Discussion No. 119 from 26 August to 13 September 2015

➔ [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?

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 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> 2015).



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Knowledge. Collaboration. Action.

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.<sup>1</sup>

## Nutrition and Social Protection<sup>2</sup>

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.

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”?

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

<sup>2</sup> Improving Nutrition through Multisectoral Approaches – Social Protection, World Bank (2013)

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 your professional networks.

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## 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