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STRENGTHENING SECTOR POLICIES FOR BETTER FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION RESULTS

Social protection



These policy guidance notes have been produced in the frame of the strategic partnership between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Directorate for International Cooperation and Development of the European Commission to boost food and nutrition security, sustainable agriculture and resilience.

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This policy guidance note is part of a series that the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Directorate for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO) of the European Commission and partners are producing to support policy makers address the food security and nutrition situation in their country. Each note provides guidance on how to sharpen the focus of sector policies in order to achieve sustainable food security and nutrition outcomes.

Contents

Introduction	1
Setting the stage	1
Purpose of this guidance note	3
Background	5
Conceptual and empirical linkages between social protection and food security and nutrition	5
Stepwise approach	
Sharpening the food security and nutrition focus of social protection	6
Step 1. Conducting a situational analysis	6
Step 2. Mapping the social protection landscape	7
Step 3. Promoting policy coherence	11
Step 4. Advocating for social protection	19
Concluding remarks	23
References	24

Introduction

This guidance note addresses the following overarching questions: how can social protection policies and programmes contribute to improving food security and nutrition (FSN) outcomes? What changes are needed to existing social protection policies and programmes, and how might these

changes be addressed? The note discusses different policy and programming options to enhance the impact of social protection, and in particular social assistance, on FSN.

Setting the stage

Globally, just over one billion people still live in extreme poverty (World Bank, 2015) and 795 million are estimated to be chronically undernourished

→ Key messages

- **Social protection is a critical strategy in the fight against hunger and malnutrition.** Social protection addresses the four dimensions of food security and the social and economic determinants of malnutrition. Already widely recognized as instrumental for poverty reduction by the Agenda 2030 and the European Union's (EU) Agenda for Change, it can tackle the interlinked root causes of poverty and hunger.
- **Social protection can address immediate and underlying social and economic determinants of malnutrition.** This can be achieved by providing access to healthy food, and promoting food systems and consumption patterns that meet dietary needs; it can remove the economic barriers to accessing health and sanitation services; and it can help promote adequate childcare practices.
- At the policy level, **integrating food security and/or nutrition with social protection in national agendas can ensure strengthened coherence and synergies** between these areas of work. This also ensures greater coordination between different sectors involved, such as between the Ministry of Social Protection (or equivalent) and the Ministry of Agriculture.
- When opting for social protection as a strategy to contribute to improving FSN outcomes, it is important to **integrate key programme design and implementation features to address the identified needs.** This can include adequate programme type for specific FSN priorities, adequate size of the transfer/benefit, predictability of and regularity in delivery, and the right timing, messaging and targeting to effectively reach the food-insecure and nutritionally vulnerable.
- Social protection plays a key role in addressing food insecurity and malnutrition but cannot do it alone. There is **need to link up social protection programmes with wider social and economic sector interventions.** Linking it to agricultural extension services, access to inputs and assets, financial and entrepreneurship programmes and other interventions can diversify livelihoods and diets and promote sustainable paths out of poverty and hunger. Likewise, linking it to health care, education and sanitation can further enhance the impacts on nutrition. Despite important impacts of social protection on FSN-related outcomes, it is critical to integrate social protection programmes with complementary actions such as food and nutrition education and appropriate messaging, as well as to strengthen gender-sensitive design.

(FAO, 2015c). Over three quarters of those living in extreme poverty are in rural areas, and nearly two thirds of the extremely poor earn a living from agriculture (Olinto, 2013).

Eliminating poverty along with eradicating hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition are two of the main global goals of FAO. Through its explicit focus on rural poverty reduction through inclusive rural transformation, FAO plays a strategic role in linking two goals of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda: Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1 of eradicating extreme poverty and reducing by 50 percent the share of the world's population in poverty; and SDG 2 of ending hunger and ensuring access to nutritious and sufficient food. With this purpose, FAO is committed to enhance the access of the rural poor to social protection systems.

Eradicating world hunger and malnutrition in the next 15 years will require investments in social protection in rural and urban areas to ensure that those living in poverty are able to access healthy food and improve their livelihoods (FAO, 2015a). Poverty is the main root cause of food insecurity and of the double burden of malnutrition – the coexistence of under- and over-nutrition in the same population across the life cycle. Poverty, hunger and malnutrition also share the same structural drivers. Agenda 2030, through its first objective to end poverty, has identified social protection as instrumental for poverty reduction, and has stated that social protection should be ensured for all (target 1.3).

Given the often large number of poor and the low coverage of social protection, many people remain excluded. Only 27 percent of the global population enjoys access to comprehensive social security systems, whereas 73 percent is covered partially or not at all, and most of them are living in rural areas (ILO, 2014). Only about 22 percent of the population of South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa (FAO, 2015c) is covered by social protection programmes of any kind; these are the regions with the highest incidence of extreme poverty and undernourishment.

Box 1 Terminology

FAO uses the Inter-Agency Social Protection Assessment's (ISPA) definition of social protection: *“the set of policies and programmes aimed at preventing or protecting all people against poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion”* (World Bank, 2015).

Social protection includes three broad components: social assistance, social insurance and labour market protection.

- **Social assistance programmes** are publicly provided conditional or unconditional cash or in-kind transfers or public works programmes.
- **Social insurance programmes** are contributory programmes that provide cover for designated contingencies affecting household welfare or income.
- **Labour market programmes** provide unemployment benefits, build skills and enhance workers' productivity and employability (FAO, 2016a).

Although this note is relevant for a wide range of social protection programmes, it will primarily address FSN issues through social assistance programmes and the necessary linkages with other sectors, especially those relevant to rural areas, such as agriculture. Social assistance is widely used to tackle poverty and hunger, it does not entail financial contributions from beneficiaries, and it often covers those in informal and rural labour markets. Reference to the other components of social protection is made where relevant, namely to social insurance and labour market programmes.

Source: FAO, 2016a and World Bank, 2014.

As highlighted in FAO 2015 publication on the State of Food and Agriculture, social protection contributes to higher incomes and food security not only by directly ensuring increases in consumption, but also by enhancing households' ability to produce food and augment income. Hence, the acknowledgement by the EU policy framework (European Commission, 2010, 127 final of 31 March 2010) prioritizes the use of social transfer policies adapted to local contexts to move recipients towards sustainable access to food.

Similarly, the Rome Declaration on Nutrition and the Framework for Action of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) specifically highlight the need to leverage social protection policies and programmes for coordinated, coherent and cross-cutting action to combat the complex nature of malnutrition. The Rome Declaration on Nutrition reaffirms the importance of social protection in addressing the multiple burdens of malnutrition and in ensuring diversified diets and adequate nutrition. The Framework for Action, through its recommendations on social protection, encourages countries to:

- *“Incorporate nutrition objectives into social protection programmes and into humanitarian assistance safety net programmes;*
- *Use cash and food transfers, including school feeding programmes and other forms of social protection for vulnerable populations, to improve diets through better access to food; and*
- *Increase income for the most vulnerable populations.”* (FAO and WHO, 2014)

Hence, social protection is recognized in the global agenda as a key strategy in the fight against hunger and malnutrition.

Purpose of this guidance note

This guidance note aims to support food security, nutrition and social protection stakeholders engaged in policy processes by serving as a basis for: (1) facilitating policy dialogue on using social protection for greater impact on FSN; (2) considering different social protection policy instruments and programmes to better contribute to FSN outcomes and complement agriculture; and (3) providing guidance on how to best influence the policy agenda to shape social protection for FSN.

The guidance note builds on the material of FAO and the EU in social protection (see Box 2). It is largely based on the FAO-led Inter-Agency Social Protection Assessment (ISPA) tool to assess social protection programmes' contribution to FSN outcomes, as well as FAO *“Strengthening coherence between agriculture and social protection to combat poverty and hunger in Africa: Framework For Analysis and Action”* (FAO, 2016a).

This note initially explores the conceptual and empirical linkages between social protection and FSN, providing an overview of the related evidence. Next, it adopts a stepwise approach to tackle these linkages at country level. The first step concerns the definition of the determinants of FSN that can be addressed within a country. The second step regards the identification of the main types of social protection policies (including overarching strategies and frameworks) and programmes in the country. Step three provides options to integrate social protection with FSN policies, as well as possible changes at programme level that can be considered to improve FSN outcomes. The final step starts off by laying out a few common misperceptions related to social protection that often impede adoption and expansion of these policies within countries, and then offers possible concrete entry points to link social protection with FSN.

Box 2

FAO and the EU's material on linkages between social protection and food security and nutrition

Worldwide, the majority of the food-insecure and poor – the part of the population most in need of and lacking in social protection – live in rural areas. FAO and the EU are committed to expanding social protection coverage to the most food-insecure and nutritionally vulnerable, including rural populations, in support of Agenda 2030. Correspondingly, the EU Agenda for Change calls for enhanced social protection in support of inclusive growth through a more comprehensive approach to human development.

In practice, this approach includes:

- Assisting countries in improving coherence of social protection, agricultural, FSN policies as well as coordination between sectors to ensure the food-insecure and nutritionally vulnerable in rural areas are also reached. FAO, with the support of the EU, developed guidance on strengthening coherence between agriculture and social protection to combat poverty and hunger. It resulted in FAO “Framework for Analysis and Action” (FAO, 2016a), including country case studies, and its “Diagnostic Tool” (FAO, 2016b).
- Supporting the use of social transfers in the fight against hunger: the reference document “Social transfers in the fight against hunger” (Freeland and Cherrier, 2012) is a resource for development practitioners to support the practical integration of social transfers into programmes addressing hunger in development cooperation.
- Generating and disseminating evidence on how households can take the step “From Protection to Production” (PtoP): FAO, in partnership with UNICEF and supported by the European Commission, leads the generation of evidence on food security and the economic and productive impacts of cash transfers in sub-Saharan Africa. Reports and further information on the PtoP project can be found on FAO Social Protection website (<http://www.fao.org/social-protection/en/>).
- Providing support to countries in making social protection more nutrition-sensitive. FAO is leading the development of an Inter-Agency Social Protection Assessment (<https://ispatools.org/>) tool to assess the contribution of social protection programmes to FSN outcomes.
- Further practical and operational suggestions to enhance the nutritional impact of social protection policies and programmes can be found in the technical paper on Nutrition and Social Protection (FAO, 2015a) prepared following the recommendations of the “ICN2 Framework for Action”.

Conceptual and empirical linkages between social protection and food security and nutrition

A number of authors (Alderman, 2016; Devereux, 2012 Slater and McCord, 2009 Slater *et al.*, 2013) and organizations (FAO, 2015a, FAO, 2015c, UNICEF, 2015, etc.) have described the potential linkages between social protection, the four dimensions of food security, and the social and economic determinants and causes of malnutrition. The following section describes briefly the potential contribution social protection can have on the dimensions of food security: access, availability, stability and utilization of food. It then turns to the immediate determinants of malnutrition, such as inadequate nutrient intake and poor caregiving practices, as well as the underlying causes of undernutrition such as poverty, food insecurity, or scarcity of water and sanitation services.

With regards to supporting people's **access** to food, there is compelling evidence of the role that social protection plays and its positive results on food consumption. Social protection can increase food consumption directly through an increase in purchasing power, which enables households to increase the quantity of food purchased (FAO, 2015c). Likewise, an increase in consumption can be produced indirectly by increasing agricultural production and crop diversification (Tiwari *et al.*, 2016).

This in turn, has an indirect impact on household and local **availability** of food. By enabling households to increase investments in agriculture (e.g. monetary or asset transfers, subsidies/distribution of inputs, agricultural insurance) and alleviating credit constraints, social protection can also improve household and local agricultural production (FAO, 2015c; Davis *et al.*, 2016). Social protection can stimulate local supply/production through an increase in demand, such as through the influx of cash within the local community from cash transfers (Thome *et al.*, 2016), or through locally procured food for school feeding programmes (Devereux *et al.*, 2010). Equally, social protection can enhance **stability** of food supply. Social protection

can help overcome seasonal and cyclical shocks and stresses by preventing a drop in consumption, such as due to a decrease in income or an increase in expenditure (e.g. funeral costs, health care costs) and by minimizing negative coping strategies (e.g. selling off assets, pulling children out of school). Similarly, social protection can improve resilience of households (especially if combined with complementary sectoral strategies) by promoting income-generating activities and creating an enabling environment (Slater *et al.*, 2014).

Social protection can play a role in food **utilization** and nutrition by promoting healthier consumption patterns that meet dietary needs in terms of quantity and diversity of food (Tiwari *et al.*, 2016; FAO, 2015a). Positive nutritional outcomes are also determined by good health status, which depends on a healthy environment (health care services and sanitation) and good caring practices (FAO, 2015a). In this sense, social protection can also facilitate access to health (e.g. health fee waivers, health care subsidies, social health insurance) and sanitation services. It can enhance nutritional knowledge and promote good sanitation practices as well as adequate childcare practices (Slater *et al.*, 2014). All of these can help tackle undernutrition (stunting, micronutrient deficiencies in iron, folic acid, iodine or vitamin A) and over-nutrition (obesity and related morbidity). Despite the successes of many programmes, especially in terms of food security and dietary diversity, mixed results have been observed in terms of nutrition, especially anthropometric outcomes. Results greatly depend on using a nutrition-sensitive lens in adjusting programme design and implementation.

Despite its positive results, social protection, on its own, is not enough to move people out of poverty and hunger. Poor households naturally face multiple constraints and risks. Hence the importance of linking policies and strategies across sectors (FAO, 2015c). This holds especially true for coherence between social protection and agricultural¹ policies in order to be more effective in helping poor households move out of poverty and hunger in a sustainable manner (FAO, 2015c). Social protection interventions, if combined with other interventions such as nutrition education (behaviour change communication), food supplements, health and sanitation services and nutrition-sensitive agriculture, can have better effects on nutrition outcomes.

¹ Includes forestry, hunting, fishing, livestock and crops.

Stepwise approach Sharpening the food security and nutrition focus of social protection

This section addresses a series of questions and issues to consider for enhancing the impact of social protection on FSN outcomes and identifying avenues for doing so. It is based on a four-step approach in support of developing policy and programme work at country level.

FIGURE 1. Four steps for addressing food security and nutrition outcomes in social protection policies



Step 1 CONDUCTING A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

An initial important step is to determine which key country FSN constraints are being or could be addressed by social protection. Based on available FSN information, the overall FSN constraints at country level should be identified to the extent possible. This section provides guidance on some key constraints that can be addressed by social protection.

What are the key FSN constraints to be addressed using social protection in the country?

The main determinants of food insecurity and malnutrition are complex and multi-dimensional. Poverty and hunger have similar and compounding structural drivers and they are both dynamic phenomena (FAO, forthcoming). For example, poorer households tend to spend much more on food as a share of their total expenditure (ADB, 2013) and are consequently even more vulnerable to (economic) shocks. Malnutrition can be an effect and a cause of poverty (FAO, 2015a), affecting people's ability to engage in productive activities in the short run (due to low caloric intake for energy to work) as well as the long term (through consequences of malnutrition in childhood on physical and cognitive development).

Identifying the different immediate determinants or underlying causes that lead to food insecurity and malnutrition of households is crucial, as these factors will determine the choice of policies and programmes and, more importantly, their design. Not all immediate determinants or underlying causes of food insecurity and malnutrition can be reached through social protection programmes alone. As will be discussed, often many of these, such as chronic poverty or poor access to services, productive resources or infrastructure, are best addressed in an integrated way, complementing social protection with other sectoral programmes (e.g. agriculture services, micro-finance, health, water/sanitation).

Whereas immediate determinants of food insecurity and malnutrition are usually easier to identify, the underlying causes and related vulnerability are often not only linked to shocks, stresses and market failures, but also to financial, social and cultural barriers.

The following are some key constraints to FSN that can be addressed by social protection, including in collaboration with other sectors:

- **Financial barriers to access** determine the ability of households and individuals to access goods (e.g. food, agricultural inputs) and services (social and economic). Many social protection programmes support income generation, consumption and/or access to basic services (Spray, 2015) as well as enhancing the ability of households to access better and more diverse food (Tiwari *et al.*, 2016).
- **Social and economic shocks and stresses** can lead to a drop in household income or a rise in expenditure, resulting in sudden drops in food consumption, as well as other negative coping strategies (e.g. selling off assets, taking children out of school). Social protection programmes can counter these effects by regularly smoothing consumption (FAO, 2015c), including during lean seasons, food price hikes, droughts, etc.
- **Market failures** can limit the income-generating potential of the poor and vulnerable and propagate cycles of poverty. Social protection can ensure regular liquidity at household level as well as increase the creditworthiness of small farm owners (Davis *et al.*, 2016; FAO, 2015c).
- **Socio-cultural barriers and gender inequality** refer to groups that face exclusion based on discriminatory social and cultural norms. These groups are often nutritionally more vulnerable due to unequal distribution of household income and assets. Women and girls are disproportionately represented among those who are undernourished, although they are usually responsible for the production of food crops and meals in the household (FAO, 2011). Differential feeding and care-

giving practices based on gender affect girls' health and future income-generating potential (ADB, 2013). Unequal intra-household dynamics and the lack of investment in children's health and nutrition can be addressed using a number of social protection programmes, such as cash transfers, and school feeding, with appropriate programme design.

- **Knowledge constraints** often contribute to poor care and feeding practices that affect nutrition outcomes, especially children's. Social protection can be linked with behavioural change and education interventions to address these constraints, such as through complementary messaging (FAO, 2015a).
- **Negative coping mechanisms** that can adversely impact nutrition outcomes, such as reducing the amount or quality of children's food intake in the event of shock (e.g. loss of income, assets or agricultural production). Social protection can minimize the use of such mechanisms by stabilizing access to cash or food.

Step 2 MAPPING THE SOCIAL PROTECTION LANDSCAPE

Having understood some key FSN constraints that social protection can address, the next step regards identifying the main existing or potential social protection policies and programmes in the country (potentially) influencing FSN. This section provides guidance on the identification of key related policy instruments and provides an overview of the different social protection programmes and their features that might influence FSN at country level.

What are the key national social protection policy documents?

With the purpose of reducing vulnerability across the life-cycle and ensuring cumulative benefits across generations, social protection systems provide a coordinated portfolio of interventions to address different dimensions of poverty and deprivation (World Bank, 2013).

In this context, social protection policies and strategies can articulate the overall vision, diversity of problems to be addressed, relevant existing and potential programmes, coordination mechanisms, financing, and monitoring and evaluation methods. National social protection strategies or policies can also provide an indication of the linkages that exist (or not) between social protection and FSN in the country.

Therefore it is paramount to identify and analyse the country social protection (or closest related) strategy or policy and to identify if there are explicit FSN objectives, ideally with specific measurable, realistic and time-bound targets for their achievement.

These can be sought under the bodies that are usually responsible for their development. Social protection policies and related ones often fall under the responsibility of ministries of labour, social protection (social affairs or equivalent), gender, or women and children. At times, ministries of finance or planning departments are in charge of developing overall social protection strategies.

In the absence of a social protection policy or strategy, social protection programmes are often included in national development plans. These too can help identify the work that is being done in social protection and its linkages with FSN.

What are the main social protection programmes in the country and what are their key features influencing food security and nutrition?

At country level, the main social protection programmes can be identified in terms of scale and coverage. In some countries, governments might only be in the phase of piloting different types of programmes, which thereafter they wish to scale up. Identifying these government programmes, which at times are also supported by international agencies, and their features will help understand where there is potential to enhance the contribution of the

programmes to FSN outcomes. As previously mentioned, social protection programmes can be classified into three broad groups: social insurance, labour market policies and social assistance.

- **Social insurance** schemes, such as pensions, disability insurance and crop insurance, rely on the capacity of participants to ensure the necessary financial contributions to the schemes. They are often provided through the employer and are in place in the formal labour market. Thus, they cannot always reach the poor and vulnerable, who often work in the informal sector and rural areas.
- **Labour market** programmes, similarly, such as skills training, entrepreneurship programmes and employment systems, tend not to reach the informal sector or those who face labour constraints due to disability, chronic illness or old age. Given that middle- and low-income countries tend to have large rural or informal economies, social insurance and labour market programmes might be limited in the extent to which they actually reach the food-insecure and malnourished populations.
- **Social assistance programmes**, tax-financed, i.e. publicly provided, transfers, (see Box 1 for definitions) can address poverty and hunger more directly, not being based on contributions or limited to the formal labour market. To do so, these can provide a transfer (cash or in-kind) to the beneficiary. Specifically, cash transfers help to improve consumption levels, often among groups that are not expected to participate fully in the labour market (e.g. children, women, the elderly, those with disabilities) and thus are vulnerable to the detrimental effects of insufficient income.

Form of the transfer and its implications for food security and nutrition

Social assistance programmes include **cash and in-kind transfers** to households or individuals. Cash transfers can be provided directly to the beneficiaries through pay-points, bank accounts, mobile phones, etc. In-kind transfers are provided in the form of food, supplementary feeding packages or other assets to help smooth consumption (e.g. school feeding) or they can constitute a waiver of an existing fee to access basic goods and services (e.g. health fee waiver). School feeding is a well-recognized type of in-kind social protection programme, which can be instrumental well beyond immediate food consumption: when using food items sourced from local farmers, school feeding can also provide a market and source of income for farming communities while stimulating the local economy.

The existence of a functioning market often determines the form of the transfer. Distributing food in-kind can be necessary in specific types of programmes, such as school feeding and vouchers, as well as when markets do not function. In such markets where there are constraints in availability of food, cash transfer can have inflationary effect on food prices.

Both cash and in-kind transfers can influence dietary diversity, particularly when integrated with nutrition education and messaging. School feeding, accompanied with food and nutrition education, has the potential to improve dietary diversity and healthy eating habits. Voucher-based transfers are also used to increase households' access to a greater variety of foodstuffs, but are only appropriate if this variety is available in local markets. Similarly, cash transfers not only increase consumption, they have also shown to increase dietary diversity and to promote a shift to more nutritious foods. For example, cash transfers in Kenya saw an increase in consumption of animal products, while in Zambia they saw an increase in pulses and legumes consumed (Tiwari *et al.*, 2016). Cash transfers, like in-kind transfers such as school feeding, can be accompanied with messaging on nutrition as well as food and nutrition education or behavioral

change communication that supports such shifts (see Step 3 for further details).

Cash transfers can also boost food consumption through an increase in agricultural production, as investments in agricultural activities can be enhanced by households that receive regular and predictable cash transfers (FAO, 2015). The resultant increase in yields can be used partly for own consumption and partly for sale, which in turn produces additional income (FAO, 2015c). For instance, in Bolivia, poor households in rural areas receiving a social pension experienced an average increase in food consumption of almost 165 percent of the value of the transfer. This was achieved through the investment of part of the transfers in agricultural inputs (FAO, 2015c). In addition, regular and predictable cash transfers can promote savings and investment in both farm and non-farm activities, and encourage households to engage in higher-risk, higher-returns activities (FAO, 2015c).

Moreover, the combination of cash transfers with agricultural support can further increase production by relaxing structural constraints such as access to inputs, financial services, advisory services and markets (FAO, 2015c). For example, the Productive Safety Nets Programme (PSNP) and the Household Asset Building Programme (HABP) in Ethiopia link up components and provide services for their joint beneficiaries under the country's Food Security Strategy. PSNP results showed significant increases in livestock holdings (FAO, 2015c). Additionally, the beneficiaries who participated in both the PSNP and the HABP's credit provision saw larger improvements in food security, better agricultural technologies and participation in non-farm business enterprises (Tirivayi *et al.*, 2013). In Bangladesh, BRAC "Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction: Targeting the Ultra Poor" (CFPR-TUP) project impact evaluations found increased agricultural asset ownership, self-employment, savings, access to land and income that resulted in greater food security, nutrition and poverty reduction. About 92 percent of participants in BRAC's CFPR-TUP were able to emerge from and stay out of ultra-poverty (Pahlowan and Samaranyake, 2014 in FAO, 2015c).

Regular and predictable cash transfers can also enhance stability of access to nutritious food, including in times of crises. They can minimize negative coping strategies such as selling off assets during a lean season or droughts, or reducing the number of meals. For instance, in Lesotho and Zambia, cash transfers reduced the probability of at least one member of the household having to eat fewer and smaller meals or going the whole day or night without food (Tiwari *et al.*, 2016). Similarly, households receiving South Africa's Child Support Grant were able to maintain their levels of agricultural production (DFID, 2011).

Requirements for beneficiaries: challenges and opportunities for food security and nutrition

Transfers (cash or in-kind) can be **conditional or unconditional**. Conditional transfers require recipients to fulfill certain conditions to receive the transfer. They usually combine the objective of increasing consumption of poor households with the promotion of human capital (health and education) accumulation and therefore often focus on children and their caregivers. Conditions are often related to children's school enrollment and attendance, use of health services (e.g. pre-natal care for pregnant women, vaccination for the newly born), participation in training sessions, and others.

Conditional cash transfer (CCT) programmes are most common in Latin America, but are also increasingly found in other parts of the world, such as in South and East Asia. Mexico's *Prospera* helps poor families in rural and urban communities to invest in human capital – improving the education, health and nutrition of their children – seeking to support the long-term improvement of their economic future and the consequent reduction of poverty. It does so by providing cash transfers to households, linking the transfers to regular school attendance and health clinic visits.

Linking cash transfers to soft (recommended) or hard (enforced) conditions can encourage health and education sectors to provide appropriate services

needed. For example, evidence from many Latin American countries (e.g. Colombia, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua) has shown that beneficiary households increased the number of preventive health visits (UNICEF, 2015).

Other programmes such as **public works** (including food for work, cash for work, or a mix of the two), are conditioned on the participation of beneficiaries in labour activities. These programmes typically seek to improve the household income and consumption of direct beneficiaries, while using their labour for building assets, such as community infrastructure (e.g. dams, roads).

Public works have shown to have a potentially positive impact on caloric intake as well as food expenditures (FAO, 2015c). However, they usually only have a significant impact on food access if they are operated at scale and with longer duration (ODI, 2013). Public works programmes may also support household food stability. For example, households participating in Ethiopia's PSNP in areas that were affected by at least two consecutive droughts but were covered by the PSNP for two or more years were able to sustain their existing levels of food consumption (HLPE, 2012). Participation in public works schemes can have unintended adverse impacts if labour constraints are not properly considered. For example, they can lead to a deterioration in mothers' nutritional status or reduce the time they spend on the production of food on farm, with negative spill-over effects on child health and nutrition (Yablonski and Woldehanna, 2008). However, such issues can be addressed in the programme design by introducing flexible and gender-responsive work arrangements, along with access to childcare facilities. While literature suggests that public works may not be the "first best transfer option" to increase food access, they can be an adequate alternative where cash transfers are not feasible for political reasons (ODI, 2013).

In contrast, unconditional transfers do not require specific returns from beneficiaries. **Unconditional cash transfers (UCT)** are particularly common in Africa. In South Africa, for instance, diverse UCTs are in place: Child Support, Foster Child, Old Age, War Veteran, Disability and Care Dependency Grants.

They play a pivotal role in the Governments' efforts to tackle poverty and inequality, with almost 14 million beneficiaries. Recent evidence indicates that improvements in human capital may also be achieved when UCTs target children, such as the Child Support Grant in South Africa and in other countries across sub-Saharan Africa (DSD and UNICEF, 2011).

UCTs are easy to administer, as they do not require the more advanced social infrastructure needed to monitor and enforce conditions. The use of conditions, on the other hand, comes with particular challenges to be considered: they require the availability and accessibility of good-quality services that are linked to transfers as well as good administrative infrastructure and strong capacity at lower levels of government to both implement and enforce the conditions.

Evidence from PtoP shows that unconditional transfers were able to yield comparable impacts in terms of education and food security to conditional transfers. Moreover, these transfers were also seen to yield economic and productive impacts among beneficiaries. The added value of the conditionality is not always definite, and its added costs in terms of resources and capacity (to implement and enforce) are not always justified. In terms of nutrition, the evidence is also mixed and not definitive.

Step 3 PROMOTING POLICY COHERENCE

As seen above, most social protection programmes can have an impact on more than one dimension of FSN. However, unless social protection policies take explicitly into account FSN considerations, their contribution may be limited. This implies a two-pronged approach: working at both the policy and programme levels. At the policy level, promoting coherence between FSN and social protection can facilitate synergies across sectoral policies while minimizing inconsistencies and conflicting goals. This can be achieved through harmonization of policies as well as through greater coordination among sectors. At the programme level, the actual impacts depend on design and

implementation features – such as those discussed above – along with the linkages developed to complementary interventions.

This section provides guidance on how to facilitate policy and programme coherence² and how to adjust social protection programmes for improved FSN.

How can social protection and food security and nutrition be made more coherent at policy level?

Harmonizing policy priorities across sectors: policy coherence can be promoted by including FSN objectives in social protection policies/strategies and, vice versa, including social protection as a strategy in FSN policies/strategies. National social protection policies can include explicit FSN objectives and/or axes with specific measurable, realistic and time-bound targets for their achievement. Similarly, the national FSN policy can include social protection as a strategy, enabling households to diversify their diets and livelihoods by improving access to and availability of nutritious food, stability and nutritional adequacy of food intake.

Supporting this type of integration of both sectors can be achieved by identifying and participating in the relevant policy processes that the country is going through, such as sector reforms, policy reviews, drawing up of new strategies or systems, and creation of new institutions. These processes might be led by national stakeholders or may be supported by international stakeholders, and they can represent an important opportunity to promote the debate about social protection and FSN at the policy level.

² FAO Strengthening coherence between agriculture and social protection to combat poverty and hunger in Africa: Framework for Analysis and Action (FAO, 2016a:p1) defines coherence as “a systematic promotion of complementary and consistent policies and programmes across sectors, thereby creating synergies to combat rural poverty and food insecurity more effectively”.

Supporting cross-sectoral coordination: a number of bodies at various levels (e.g. steering committees, technical working groups) on the side of social protection as well as FSN offer space for different sectors to work together. In countries with existing social protection and/or FSN strategies/plans, coordinating bodies are often created to lead and implement the cross-sectoral strategies.

However, promoting greater coordination among different stakeholders can also mean encountering stumbling blocks due to established sectoral differences. For example, institutions working on social protection are often

more inclined to look for synergies between social dimensions, such as health and education, and have less contact with economic sectors (Slater *et al.*, 2016).

Ministries of agriculture, on the other hand, often do not see the potential of social protection to contribute to productivity and agricultural and rural development. While food security is an issue usually led by ministries of agriculture or rural development, the focus is often put on national-level food production and support to the most productive farmers, giving scant attention and resources to the most vulnerable and poor. Nutrition, by contrast, is traditionally assigned to the health sector, which tends to have limited dialogue with agriculture.

Box 3

Examples of FAO and the EU's work on social protection and hunger reduction

With the support of the EU Improved Global Governance for Hunger Reduction Programme, FAO has been able to expand its work in linking social protection, food security and agriculture, generating the evidence on the two-way linkages between agriculture and social protection and strengthening coherence between agriculture and social protection. This work has been built on seven country case studies in Africa, Asia and Latin America. FAO brought together government officials from ministries of finance, agriculture and social protection in regional workshops and capacity development events, to increase their awareness and knowledge of the potential synergies between the two domains to reduce rural poverty, improve food security and contribute to inclusive growth.

The growing interest in strengthening coherence between agriculture and social protection at global level has spurred a number of country

requests for technical support to national policy dialogue and programme operationalization. In Malawi, the EU Global Governance Programme supported a first assessment of complementarities and synergies between agriculture and social protection programmes, which led to the Government's request for a technical cooperation programme to expand this work and build national capacities to influence ongoing and future programme design and implementation. In Zambia, FAO has been working to integrate its contribution to the United Nations Joint Programme on Social Protection, aiming to make social protection programmes more responsive to the needs and livelihood characteristics of small family farmers, as well as to make the agriculture programmes oriented towards poverty reduction. In Lesotho, FAO contributed to developing the capacities of the social protection system to assist small family farmers in managing shocks, which has been particularly relevant given the drought induced by *El Niño* and the consequent rise in food prices.

Source: FAO, 2016.

Another important actor is the ministry of finance. As the government budget holder, it plays an important role in determining the future of programmes and their scalability. It also plays an important role in the relationship with multilateral agencies, since many of the social protection programmes in middle- and low-income countries are financed, at least partially and/or initially, with external grants or loans. This is especially true when ministries of social protection (or equivalent) have low levels of funding, technical capacity and/or political voice.

Box 4**Working on integrating FSN considerations in social protection processes: The Kyrgyz Republic**

The Kyrgyz Republic launched an Assessment-Based National Dialogue (ABND) process on social protection in cooperation with the International Labour Organization (ILO) in late 2014. The ABND provides a high-level platform and political space to jointly discuss policy options to achieve full social protection coverage under a nationally defined Social Protection Floor. FAO has been supporting the ABND since the first of three rounds of consultations, both in the underlying assessment of gaps in the social protection coverage of the most food-insecure and nutritionally vulnerable, as well as in the formulation of policy options to address these gaps.

Source: FAO, forthcoming.

In countries where perspectives on the respective roles of social protection, FSN and other sectors are not conducive to collaboration, it is crucial to build a common understanding of the benefits of the complementarity of their roles. This could be done by disseminating evidence or by piloting innovative approaches that can improve the environment and foster more consistency between key stakeholders of food security and social protection. International stakeholders have a key role to play in this context, given their provision of technical and financial resources.

Box 5**Creating linkages between FSN and social protection through one institutional body: Cambodia**

With the presence of 17 technical working groups on various issues, the Government decided to merge two of these groups to form the FSN and the Social Protection working group. The responsible government counterpart for this group is the Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD), which is also mandated to oversee the country's social assistance policy. In addition, CARD is involved in the Scaling Up Nutrition process and has been working on FSN. Having one agency and/or body covering two mandates can help integrate the two issues and ensure better reflection in the development of policies. In the process of developing the latest social protection strategy, CARD has also been playing a key facilitating role in bringing together its own expertise on social assistance with other relevant actors, such as the Ministries of Health, Planning and Finance. Through support to CARD, FAO is contributing to greater linkages between social assistance and FSN.

How can social protection programmes be enhanced to better contribute to food security and nutrition?

Many countries have a variety of social protection programmes in place that directly or indirectly address FSN priorities. The FSN outcomes may be improved by adjusting programme features when necessary and/or by scaling up programmes to cover a larger proportion of the food-insecure and malnourished. These processes are described in detail in the ISPA tool for FSN, and include the following six possibilities:

- **Defining specific FSN objectives and theory of change at the core of social protection programmes:** the extent to which FSN concerns are reflected in the objectives and theory of change of a social protection programme will determine how effectively the programme reaches the food-insecure and malnourished, as well as whether and to what extent the programme positively impacts FSN.
- **Using targeting methods that include the needs of the food-insecure and nutritionally vulnerable:** universal social protection coverage would certainly facilitate the inclusion of the food-insecure and nutritionally vulnerable. Most often, however, political will, existing perceptions, specific programme objectives, as well as resource and capacity constraints may determine the limits in programme scope and scale (UNICEF, 2012).
When opting for targeted approaches in the face of such factors, targeting methodologies can be better tailored to FSN by strengthening FSN-related criteria and by harmonizing the targeting of social protection and FSN programmes, such through overlapping poverty maps with food security/nutrition maps. In this context, there are a number of trade-offs to be considered. Single eligibility criterion (e.g. nationally standardized income for means testing) may not always capture relevant FSN issues, such as large differences in the

Box 6

Bringing stakeholders together: Rwanda

In Rwanda, FAO supported the development of a multi-stakeholder workshop on social protection, nutrition and agriculture linkages in May 2016. The workshop brought together government counterparts from the Ministries of Local Development and Agriculture to discuss synergies. The workshop gave particular focus to the design of the Government's "minimum package of economic interventions" and its linkage with the national flagship social protection intervention, the Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme. As a result, training components on nutrition-sensitive social protection are being developed, among other complementarities.

Source: FAO, 2016.

Box 7

Including FSN objectives: The Ethiopia Productive Safety Nets Programme

The Ethiopia Productive Safety Nets Programme offers public works opportunities for poor people with labour capacity and unconditional cash or in-kind transfers for poor people who are unable to work. It seeks to address both immediate consumption needs and long-term needs by building resilience. One of the objectives of the fourth phase of the programme is the provision of livelihoods services and nutrition support for food-insecure rural households. This is reflected in the components of the programme.

Source: World Bank, 2016. ET Productive Safety Nets Project 4 (PSNP 4) website.

price of food baskets in diverse regions, unstable food availability, or discrepancies within a specific household.

On the other hand, using or combining various targeting methods and indicators/variables is more likely to effectively capture the diverse dimensions of food insecurity and nutrition. For instance, they can consider nutrition-relevant criteria, such as households with children in the first 1000 days (from pregnancy to their second birthday), adolescent girls, expecting and lactating women, orphans, people living with HIV/AIDS, the sick and the elderly (Alderman and Mustafa, 2013).

- **Designing benefits that reflect FSN needs:** the type of a programme benefit should be adequate to address FSN needs and priorities. The size of the benefit should be sufficient to help households of different sizes meet their needs for a nutritious diet, defined in proportion to overall consumption. For example, in Ethiopia's PSNP, the transfer is aligned with the kilocalorie levels provided by the humanitarian food basket (2,100 kcal), and has its value set as equivalent to 15 kg of cereals and 4 kg of pulses per person per month.

Regularity and predictability of benefits over an extended duration can help to smooth consumption, facilitate household planning and investment in productive activities, and minimize negative coping strategies.

Finally, the timing of benefit delivery can be adapted to a number of FSN influencing factors, such as food-insecurity seasonality.

- **Ensuring responsiveness of social protection programmes:** in order for benefits to be responsive to FSN needs, programmes need to take stock of changes in beneficiaries' lives and environments, such as by including monitoring and periodic evaluation mechanisms. Such mechanisms can ensure the programme's flexibility to evolve and adapt its scale, benefit level and delivery method according to changing FSN needs in the face of shocks, inflation or other socio-economic,

Box 8 Size of transfer

Research findings from FAO PtoP project, a multi-country impact evaluation of cash transfers in sub-Saharan Africa in partnership with UNICEF, found that for social protection interventions that have a positive impact across a range of domains including health, schooling, nutrition, investment and productive activities, the size of the cash transfer was set from 20-25 percent of the costs for household consumption.

Source: Davis and Handa, 2015.

Box 9 Responsive cash transfers: The Hunger Safety Net Programme in Kenya

15

The Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) is an unconditional cash transfer operating in the four poorest and driest counties in Kenya. It provides approximately US\$25 in cash for up to 100 000 households every two months. Phase II of the programme (2012-2017) was designed to be scaled up and down in response to weather shocks (e.g. drought/*El Niño*). In 2011 approximately 95 percent of all households in the four counties were voluntarily registered for potential benefits, and nearly all of them now have a bank account. During 2015, HSNP was able to scale up three times to respond to droughts and provide emergency cash transfers to over 207 000 additional households. In October 2015, the programme structure was used to provide to all non-routine beneficiary households a crisis-preparedness payment in advance of the anticipated *El Niño* rains and possible flooding.

Source: Fitzgibbon, C. 2016.

socio-demographic, natural or political developments. For instance, Ethiopia's PSNP transfer values are reviewed annually and adjusted if necessary to account for inflation (Spray, 2015).

Similarly, the financial resources raised and allocated should allow not only for full programme implementation to achieve the expected FSN outcomes, but also for programmes to be adapted in the case of a rapid change in FSN needs.

■ **Strengthening the gender-sensitive programme approach:**

social protection programmes that are gender-sensitive can reduce women's time constraints, strengthen their control over income, and enhance maternal and child welfare, including nutrition (UNICEF, 2014). Furthermore, women bear a double burden in terms of malnutrition due to gender inequalities in poverty and higher nutritional requirements during pregnancy and lactation.

Gender empowerment initiatives within social protection can tackle important causes of food insecurity and malnutrition, such as unequal access to resources within the household. The gender empowerment approach can be further strengthened through programme objectives (e.g. to empower women) and programme design (e.g. inclusion of spouse sensitization on gender issues) (FAO, 2015). However, it is important to consider the potential conflicts between empowerment of women and over-burdening. For instance, the burden of complying with conditions in CCTs is generally borne by women, which can divert labour from child caring, farming and other productive activities.

Overall, social protection programmes can help break the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition if they: i) increase women's access to education, assets and capital resources while bearing in mind their workload and time constraints; ii) raise awareness about changing social norms regarding intra-household control

of resources, division of labour and power relationships within the community; and iii) support rights-based legislation (FAO, 2015d).³

- **Promoting FSN messaging in social protection programmes:** social protection programmes can also address the knowledge constraints that often contribute to poor food and care practices. They can do so by integrating training and messaging for behavioural change. These can be linked to conditions of the programme (hard – enforced, or soft – suggested). Such nutrition education can address culturally sensitive childcare practices, nutrition education (e.g. dietary needs of children, dietary diversity, breast-feeding) and good hygiene practices. For instance, results from a study conducted by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) produced evidence that providing nutrition education along with cash transfers accelerated the reduction of child stunting in recipients by more than 7 percent (IFPRI, 2016). Social norms that underlie food insecurity and malnutrition can also be addressed, such as unequal access to resources within the household, women's restricted access to education, assets and capital resources, and unequal division of labour and power relationships within the community.

How can coherence between social protection and other programmes be enhanced for food security and nutrition?

In addition to considering key design and implementation elements, creating linkages with other sectors to tackle the multi-dimensional nature of FSN can enhance the effectiveness of social protection programmes in addressing food insecurity and malnutrition. This entails enhancing programme coordination and facilitating programme linkages with relevant sectors.

³ FAO is currently developing a module on gender-sensitive social protection, with further information and discussion on the issue.

TABLE 1. Modalities to develop coherent social protection and agricultural programmes

Modality	Description	Design	Examples
Adapting single interventions	Design or adaptation of standalone interventions can maximize coherence.	Designing social protection interventions to be coherent with the agricultural livelihoods of their beneficiaries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapting delivery mechanisms according to livelihoods of beneficiaries (Kenya). Timing public work programmes to avoid conflicting with beneficiaries' agricultural activities (Bangladesh, Ethiopia).
		Incorporating productive elements to social protection programmes to increase and diversify the impacts on livelihoods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allowing for higher transfer levels for beneficiaries to meet their consumption needs and to invest in agriculture (Bangladesh). Implementing public works to support building agricultural assets (Ghana).
Combining interventions into a single programme	Various interventions can be combined into one programme so that targeted households participate in complementary interventions.	Implementing different types of intervention (of a social and productive nature) simultaneously complementing each other.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Including public works and agricultural support components in a food security programme (Ethiopia). Providing food and cash transfers in exchange for working on land conservation (Uganda).
		Delivering interventions sequenced over time to meet different needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding from social transfers to include a broader menu of complementary agricultural interventions (Rwanda).
Coordinating and aligning multiple programmes	Synergies between various sectoral interventions can be established even when they are not delivered in the same locations or targeted to the same beneficiaries. Alignment involves ensuring that interventions are consistent and that conflicts are addressed or avoided as much as possible.	Delivering agricultural interventions to smallholders that are not targeted by cash transfers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linking school feeding with public procurement programmes (Brazil). Providing small grants to local food traders to match the increased demand resulting from cash transfers (Kenya).
		Harmonizing existing programmes to improve their coverage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distributing input subsidy and cash transfers to distinct groups of poor rural households, depending on household profiles (Malawi).
		Aligning programmes to avoid negative policy impacts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting a guaranteed price for food from farmers and making the food available for distribution through social safety net programmes (Bangladesh).
		Aligning programmes to manage policy transitions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using cash transfers to help smallholder farmers transition to different production systems.

Source: Adapted from FAO, 2016a.

Diversifying livelihoods to ensure sustainable food security can be achieved through linkages with productive sectors, such as agriculture, while nutritional outcomes will require broader linkages, such as with health, education and sanitation.

FAO Framework for Analysis and Action (FAO, 2016a) identifies the following modalities to build coherence between social protection and agriculture for greater FSN (Table 1): (1) freestanding programmes – for example social protection programmes that are coherent with beneficiaries' livelihood strategies and related FSN needs; (2) joint programmes, which use layering of interventions within one programme or sequence them over time; and (3) aligned programmes, which entails programme dialogue among sectors to avoid potentially negative impacts and exploit positive interactions (FAO, 2016a).

To delve deeper into the modalities of programme coherence, the following three examples are presented:

- **In Lesotho, the Child Grant Programme (CGP)**, with the support of FAO and several other partners, has piloted and scaled up a complementary home gardening and nutrition support initiative. Named Lesotho Food Security to Social Protection Programme (LFSSP), the objective is to improve the food security and dietary diversity of poor and vulnerable households. In complementarity with the Child Grant Programme, the LFSSP initiative supports climate-smart agriculture extension and nutrition training, the provision of information on agricultural production and nutrition, as well as agricultural inputs (varieties of vegetable seeds). The results of a study undertaken to assess the impact of these joint initiatives revealed that there was a large increase in vegetable harvested in the beneficiaries' garden plots. Non-labour-constrained households have also made greater investments in more productive items to scale up their agricultural operations. These results were not possible with CGP alone. The combination of CGP and LFSSP proved to have greater impact on the food security and welfare of poor households.

- **In Bangladesh, the BRAC's Targeting the Ultra Poor (TUP)**

programme is a commonly cited example of a livelihood programme in which participant households receive income-generating assets (usually livestock) and training on business development, nutrition and social development on a bi-weekly basis for two years. The programme had very positive nutrition outcomes not only for participating households but also for poor non-participating households. This has been attributed to the holistic nature of the programme, which addresses several constraints of the ultra-poor, as well as to the mentoring, which in particular encourages positive behavioural changes (Raza and Van de Poel, 2016).

- **Kenya's Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children**

(CT-OVC) programme is founded on strong cross-sectoral coordination initiative. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development collaborated with other sectors in exchanging information and ensuring that households were able to access and benefit from essential services, including education, health care, and birth registration. This was achieved by establishing guidelines at the national level with the Ministries of Education and Health to designate clear responsibilities. Furthermore, an agreement between the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Civil Registrar, the agency responsible for issuing national identity cards and birth and death certificates, was reached to facilitate programme enrolment procedures (Bryant, 2009).

Step 4 ADVOCATING FOR SOCIAL PROTECTION

Working at the country level to maximize the linkages between social protection and FSN will require understanding the main policy-related debates in the country.

This section seeks to provide useful elements for understanding and participating in country debates regarding social protection for FSN. It starts by reviewing the common myths regarding social assistance in order to reveal the stumbling blocks that are often encountered and then presents arguments to refute them. This is followed by a brief review of regional and international commitments that can support the social protection debate related to FSN. Finally, it mentions potential partnerships that can be sought at country level.

What are the common myths regarding social assistance and how can they be challenged?

The expansion of social protection is often held back due to some common misperceptions. The following are a few of the main myths (FAO and UNICEF, 2016):

- Cash transfers are too costly to implement at scale.
- Cash transfers are fully consumed, rather than utilized for productive activity, and create dependency (reduce livelihood work effort).
- Cash transfers lead to community-level price distortion and inflation.
- Cash transfers are spent on alcohol or tobacco.
- Child-focused grants increase fertility rates.

Ensuring preparedness in facing these prevailing views is essential in order to engage with key actors. There is enough evidence from the past decade regarding the social and economic benefits of social assistance programmes to counter these myths, as presented earlier in this document. In order to raise awareness regarding social protection and its benefits, the following options are proposed:

Box 10 Exploring financing options

Multiple financing options exist depending on national short-, medium- and long-term social protection objectives. ILO recommends the following steps, which support financing of basic social protection coverage of the extreme poor, including those who are food-insecure and malnourished:

- Tax reforms to increase financial resources, raised and spent progressively.
- Gradual increases in social spending (and coverage) as a proportion of gross domestic product and as a proportion of total government spending.
- Redistribution between social policy areas to refocus expenditure on most urgent needs.
- Progressive revenue collection, and a refocusing of spending within social sectors and policy areas to make it more progressive and more effective in combating poverty and vulnerability.

Source: ILO and WHO, 2009.

- **Present social protection as an investment:** as the debate on social protection is often centred on its costs, recent work by a number of organizations has shown that social protection is affordable even in low-income countries (Box 10) and should be viewed as an investment rather than a cost, given its important impacts in building human capital (as presented earlier). Technical and political arguments as well as returns on investment can be taken into account (FAO, 2016a). This is particularly the case with regard to FSN outcomes, which can be addressed more

effectively through coordinated inter-sectoral efforts that tackle the root causes of food insecurity and malnutrition.

- **Present the productive impacts of social protection:** FAO has been at the forefront of generating evidence on the impacts of cash transfer programmes on households' productive activities. Overall, results from impact evaluations showed the cash transfer programmes had significant positive impacts on income-generating activities of beneficiary households. Instead of reducing work effort or creating dependency, cash transfer programmes increased the ability of households to improve their livelihoods. For instance, in Zambia crop production increased as a result of the cash transfer programmes, while in Ethiopia, Malawi and Zimbabwe, cash transfers induced changes in the types of crops that were cultivated. Programmes led to increased crop sales in Ethiopia, Malawi and Zambia and increased the consumption of own farm production in Kenya and Zambia. A significant increase in livestock holdings, particularly of chickens and smaller animals, was common to most countries where the evaluations were carried out. (Daidone *et al.*, 2017)
- **Present evidence of positive impacts of transfers on the wider local economy:** there is a fear that cash transfers injected into local communities may lead to inflation as the cash may increase demand without an associated increase in supply. On the contrary, evidence coming from the UNICEF-FAO partnership PtoP across seven case studies shows benefits expand beyond direct programme beneficiaries, reaching the wider community and generating multiplier effects in the local economy (Thome *et al.*, 2016; Barca *et al.*, 2015). Evidence across the countries studied showed that cash transfers do not generate price inflation or distortion within the communities; rather, cash transfers have important multiplier impacts in the local economy that primarily accrue to non-beneficiaries (FAO and UNICEF, forthcoming).

- **Present lack of evidence on systematic misuse of cash transfers from social protection:** the very few, usually apocryphal, stories of misuse of cash transfers often gain greater attention than the overwhelmingly positive impacts cash transfers have on their beneficiaries. These need to be confronted with solid evidence that depicts the reality of impacts. Evidence using eight rigorous evaluations conducted on large-scale government unconditional cash transfers in sub-Saharan Africa under the Transfer Project clearly shows that on average, the misuse of transfers for temptation goods (specifically alcohol and tobacco) is not supported by data (FAO and UNICEF, forthcoming).
- **Present lack of evidence on increase in fertility rates:** although there have been fears that child-based cash transfers or grants increase fertility rates, evidence from sub-Saharan Africa show otherwise. For example, the South Africa Child Social Grant demonstrated no increases in fertility (Rosenberg *et al.*, 2015). Similarly, findings from the Transfer Project from four countries (Kenya, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe) found no fertility impacts (FAO and UNICEF, forthcoming). On the contrary, findings show increased birth spacing among women in South Africa and delayed pregnancies among youth in Kenya and South Africa (FAO and UNICEF, forthcoming).
- **Present social protection as a right:** a number of countries have included the right to social protection in their constitution and/or ratified related international agreements. Both the Right to Social Protection and the Right to Food are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948 as part of the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of an individual and his/her family (Article 25.1). The Right to Social Security is recognized under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966 (Articles 9 and 10) and legally binding on its 160 State Parties. Finally, the Social Protection Floors Recommendation (No. 202),

adopted by the International Labor Conference in 2012, expresses the commitment of Member States to realize the Right to Social Protection and universal access to a minimum set of basic guarantees, including essential services and social transfers.

What are the international and regional commitments that support the synergies between social protection and food security and nutrition?

The fact that countries often make political commitments at regional or global level can be leveraged as a starting point for policy reform by national stakeholders. For example, the Updated Comprehensive Framework for Action of the High Level Task Force on Global Food Security calls for the expansion of social protection systems for better FSN outcomes.

As described in the introduction, social protection is also well reflected in the SDGs as a practical action that governments can take to eradicate extreme poverty.

ILO's Social Protection Floor Initiative also supports countries that are moving ahead in providing social protection. The social protection floors are nationally defined sets of basic social protection guarantees that should ensure, as a minimum, that over the life cycle all in need have access to essential health care and to basic income security, which together secure access to goods and services defined as necessary at the national level. The initiative is based on the strategy adopted by the 100th Session of the International Labour Conference in 2011.

At the regional level, agendas such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)'s Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection adopted in 2013 reinforce the call to include social protection in national policy frameworks. As regards Africa in particular, a number of agendas also have the potential for promoting coherence between social protection and FSN, such as: the Framework for Africa's Food Security; the High-Level Declaration for Ending Hunger in Africa

by 2025; the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme; and the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth & Transformation.

What are some potential partners in social protection related to food security and nutrition?

Working with partners that have long-standing credibility and experience in social protection can complement the expertise of each partner and open new avenues of work. Besides government partners previously addressed in this note, development partners – for example bilateral agencies (e.g. Germany's GIZ, the UK's Department for International Development) and multilateral organizations (e.g. UNICEF, the World Bank, ILO) – usually play a central role in the institutional context of social protection. Often, they have substantial interest and engagement in their respective policy processes in a country due to the significant financial and/or technical resources they have invested. The involvement of development partners is significant in a number of countries, while increasing national institutionalization and government ownership of programmes is key to ensure their sustainability.

FAO has been building partnerships with development partners in a number of countries:

- Through the Purchase from Africans for Africa, FAO works with governments and with the World Food Programme (WFP) in Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger and Senegal in support of small family farmers and the commercialization of their produce to home-grown school feeding (HGSF) programmes. In Zambia, FAO is supporting the Government in developing a multi-sectoral HGSF implementation framework and in scaling up the programme nationally in partnership with WFP. In this context, FAO is developing the methodology for an *ex-ante* evaluation of the HGSF in order to assess impacts on smallholder farmers and their families, addressing aspects of FSN.

- In Lesotho, FAO has provided support to the formulation of the National Social Protection Strategy and Plan of Action and to the testing of the community development model that integrates social protection and livelihood support interventions. In 2016, FAO and UNICEF defined the research questions and evaluation methodology for the impact evaluation of the CGP and the Sustainable Poverty Reduction through Income, Nutrition and Access to Government Services project. The study aims to quantify the impacts of the two programmes at the household and local economy levels, and address nutrition aspects by administering a survey module, which looks at outcomes such as children and adult dietary diversity, household food security and food consumption.
- In the context of the ISPA initiative, established by members of the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board with the aim to jointly develop a set of practical tools that help countries improve their social protection system and programmes, FAO and GIZ are leading the technical working group to develop the tool to assess how social protection programmes contribute to FSN outcomes (see Box 2).
- FAO has worked with the World Bank on Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection, promoting South-South cooperation through the 2015 Global Forum on nutrition-sensitive social protection.

Concluding remarks

The Agenda 2030 has identified social protection as one of the actions that governments can take to effectively reduce poverty. Social protection can play an important role in enhancing FSN outcomes, especially by supporting people's access to more and/or more nutritious food.

FAO is committed to supporting the Agenda 2030 for greater poverty reduction through the extension of social protection to rural populations as well as through the improvement of FSN. This note has attempted to provide initial elements and guidance to stakeholders on how to shape social protection policy and programme for greater impact on FSN.

The contributions of social protection to FSN will depend on its integration at policy level. Without incorporating FSN concerns into social protection strategies, or vice versa, the impacts on FSN might be at best unintentional. At the programme level, the impacts of social protection programmes will

depend on ensuring their food security- and nutrition-sensitive design and implementation. In order to maximize these impacts, it is critical to support countries in expanding and scaling up social protection programmes.

Programmes can enhance their ability to reach the malnourished and food-insecure, as well as those at risk of food insecurity and malnutrition. They can ensure that benefits are regular, predictable, sizable and timely, while seeking opportunities to promote links with complementary interventions.

Ensuring greater impact of social protection on FSN can be achieved by enhancing coherence between social protection and relevant sectors, such as agriculture, health and finance.

The positive impacts of social protection programmes on productive areas, such as agricultural productivity, livelihood diversification, and development of the local economy, are still not widely understood or appreciated.

Evidence needs to be further disseminated and policy dialogue needs to be strengthened to increase awareness and strengthen the development of best-tailored programmes.

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