

# Not just for Swedes

– UNIVERSAL SOCIAL PROTECTION IN SWEDEN'S  
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION



Church of Sweden 

member of  
**actalliance**

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**COVER PHOTO:** Ethiopia, May 2016. Lalibela and Afar. Payment point in Irfa, Lasta Lalibela. Workers who are participating in Church of Sweden's "Cash for work" project are getting paid for 15 days of work. The payments help many to survive the draught instead of migrating. Public work programmes such as "Cash for work" is a major component in Ethiopia's social protection system.

**PHOTO:** Simon Stanford/IKON

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*Sweden's experience of social security policies should be utilized in realizing the purposes and goal of the policy for global development. /.../*

*A policy for social development and social security strengthens people in their struggle against poverty. It must be universal, based on broad and active participation in civil society and adapted to the conditions prevailing in each society.*

Shared Responsibility: Sweden's Policy for Global Development Government Bill 2002/03:122

*Universalism is key to human development, and human development for everyone is attainable.*

Human Development Report 2016: Human Development for Everyone

*A general welfare system is key to equality.*

Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven during the launch of Human Development Report 2016: Human Development for Everyone

*Unfortunately, Sweden's international development cooperation is not very influenced by the Swedish welfare model.*

Johan Sandberg, sociologist at Lund University, at a seminar in January 2015

*Benefits meant exclusively for the poor people often end up being poor benefits.*

Amartya Sen, The Political Economy of Targeting (1995)

# Content

Foreword	5
Summary and recommendations	6
1. Background	8
2. Purpose and method	10
Part I: Theoretical discussion	
3. What is universal social protection?	11
4. Benefits of universal social protection – and some of the counter arguments	12
5. Universal social protection in global development	16
Part II: Universal social protection in Sweden’s development cooperation	
6. Social protection in development cooperation and sustainable development debate	20
7. Universal social protection in policies for Sweden’s development cooperation	24
8. Examples of Sida’s work with social protection	26
9. International development actors’ work with social protection – and Sweden’s contribution	27
Notes	32

## Foreword

When Church of Sweden published the anthology *Cash in the hand – Rights based social protection as a method of eradicating poverty and hunger*<sup>1</sup> nearly five years ago, we wanted to start a conversation about how social cash transfers can help reducing hunger and poverty globally. Our aim was that social protection should be given a clear role in Sweden's international development cooperation, and that Sweden to a greater extent than previously would share our country's experiences of having developed a largely universal and inclusive social protection system over a long period of time. Much has happened since then, particularly in the international arena. The *World Social Protection Report 2017–2018* estimated that only 29 percent of the world's population is covered by a comprehensive social protection system—about 5.2 billion people lack or have only partial access to social protection. Highly influenced by the ILO recommendation 202, which states that all member states should, at a minimum, introduce national social protection floors, social protection has been highlighted as a crucial tool to achieve several of the Sustainable Development Goals.

With this report, we wanted to go a step further by discussing how social protection systems that are supported by international development partners are designed and what implications this may bring. Globally, the majority of donor funded social protection schemes consist of cash or in-kind transfers targeted specifically at those living in extreme poverty and vulnerability. The targeted approach differs significantly from the universal welfare model that Sweden employs and which, according to research, is better suited than other models to reduce poverty and inequality. Broad social protection systems that include the whole population tend to increase the willingness of the middle class to pay taxes, thereby increasing the funding of public social protection and strengthening the sustainability of these systems.

The report reviews how social protection supported by Sweden's international development cooperation has been designed and implemented. Are there indications that Sweden, with financial support, technical assistance or political influence supports the development of universal social protection? We found that although Sweden has significantly scaled up its support to social protection development in recent years, the agenda for universal social protection in Sweden's development cooperation remains rather invisible.

The report was written and published in Swedish in 2015. Due to increasing interest in universal social protection at global level, and considering the discussion on growing economic inequalities between and within countries, we wanted to make a revised edition available to an international audience. The English version includes less interview material and detailed information concerning Sweden's development cooperation policy and practice, and a stronger focus on different international development actors' work and positions regarding universal social protection.

Our aim with the report is to stimulate debate on the role of universal social protection in development cooperation, and to encourage the sharing of country experiences.

Erik Lysén, Director of International Affairs, Church of Sweden

## Summary and recommendations

### BENEFITS OF UNIVERSAL SOCIAL PROTECTION

A number of countries in Asia, Middle East, Africa and Latin America are in the process of establishing various kinds of social cash transfers such as social assistance, child grants and old age pensions. Most of these programmes are specifically targeted at people living in poverty and vulnerability. Intuitively, this seems like a logical approach – if you want to improve the situation for those who are worst off, you should give benefits to them and no others. It also appears as cost-effective to direct limited tax revenues or development aid to those who need it most.

The *universal welfare model* from which Sweden has long experience is instead designed to benefit the entire population. Research shows that universal social protection has many advantages.

Universal systems reduce poverty and inequality more effectively than targeted social protection and contrary to common belief, universal social protection systems are more redistributive than targeted systems. This “redistribution paradox” is explained by the fact that universal systems generally have a larger budget than targeted systems and are thereby more redistributive *in absolute numbers*, although the targeted systems are more redistributive when *calculated as a percentage of the spending*. Or expressed differently: the more we target benefits exclusively to the poorest, the lower the actual amount of the benefits will be, and the less helpful they will be in lifting people out of poverty.

That universal systems in general have a larger budget than targeted systems is in turn explained by the fact that it is easier to achieve political consensus around systems that include everyone in the society. The willingness of middle- and high income-earners to pay the taxes required to finance social protection increases when they themselves are included and benefit from the system. Similarly, public care services, schools, and health providers can afford to offer high-quality services if they are used by everyone and not only by those who cannot afford private alternatives. In the words of economist

Amartya Sen: “*Benefits meant exclusively for the poor people often end up being poor benefits*”

With universal systems, several of the risks associated with targeting are avoided. Targeting is costly to implement and requires well-functioning and transparent government agencies. Targeted social protection risks the abuse of power and corruption and can lead to stigmatisation of beneficiaries. All targeted social protection schemes will also have a certain degree of arbitrariness in form of inclusion and exclusion errors of beneficiaries.

Exclusion errors are particularly problematic, mistakenly leaving people who would greatly need social protection without benefits. This undermines the systems’ very objective of poverty eradication. If the goal is to reach all those living in poverty, the chances of succeeding are greatest in a system which covers everyone in the society.

Furthermore, universal cash transfers do not create poverty traps – they create no incentives for recipients to reduce their own efforts to increase their income.

Finally, universal social protection can strengthen people’s feeling of citizenship and belonging in the society, as well as individuals’ trust in the state and in their fellow human beings.

Despite strong reasons for a universal social protection model, it is always necessary to supplement with certain forms of targeted support to those whose needs cannot be covered by general schemes and services. This may comprise assistance to people who have a long-term illness or a disability, or who are temporarily unemployed, where some form of assessment is necessary.

In practice, there is therefore no sharp distinction between universal and targeted systems. At one end of the scale are universal systems that are not means-tested, with no conditions attached, which cover the entire population or the entire population within certain age categories (children, pensioners, mothers). At the other end of the scale are systems that cannot be regarded as universal at all. These are means-tested systems solely

targeting the poorest and thereby excluding large segments of the population, and conditional benefits which paradoxically hinders accessibility for certain marginalised, poor groups.

Between these two extremes, there are more or less targeted systems where the eligibility criteria are transparent, which covers a large proportion of the population and which do not specifically exclude marginalised groups.

### Sweden's development cooperation policy

Along with the other Nordic countries, Sweden was a pioneer in universal social protection. In this capacity, Sweden has a great deal to offer in terms of knowledge and experience. Many low- and middle income countries are also asking for this kind of expertise.

Education and health care have long been important areas in Swedish development cooperation, even if there has been a trend of reducing development aid for education. That Swedish aid has supported the development of universal education and health care is well-attested, but there is little to show that Sweden have supported the development of *universal* social security systems.

In recent years, Sweden has been increasingly involved in supporting the development of social security systems, and the issue of social protection has gained higher priority in Swedish development cooperation, especially since the launch of Agenda 2030. Nevertheless, most of the social protection-related interventions where Sweden has been involved in recent years in sub-Saharan Africa concern targeted cash transfers rather than universal social protection systems.

Individual representatives from Sida and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs have raised the issue of universal social protection within various multinational bodies, including in the United Nations and the World Bank. Guidelines for Sweden's development cooperation clearly express a mandate to support the development of social protection, and to make use of Swedish experiences of a general welfare model.

*Sweden's Policy for Global Development* from 2002 contains a clear statement that Sweden's experience of

universal welfare should be used in international development cooperation. This statement has recently been reinforced in the Government's written communication *Politiken för global utveckling i genomförandet av Agenda 2030*. The previous *Aid policy framework* from 2014 and the current *Policy framework for Sweden's development cooperation* from 2016 also includes statements about the role of social protection in Sweden's international development cooperation, although the issue of universal social protection is not mentioned in these frameworks.

Raising the idea about universal social protection in Sweden's development cooperation is not a way of putting new demands on low- and middle income countries, or about advising against all forms of targeted social protection. However, Sweden should draw attention to the benefits of universal social protection in the development cooperation dialogue.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings in this report, Church of Sweden gives the following recommendations:

- Sweden's own experience of universal social protection should be utilised to a greater extent in Sweden's development cooperation – in bilateral development cooperation and in international development arenas such as the UN and World Bank, as a positive example of implementing Sweden's Policy for Global Development.
- Policies and guidelines for Sweden's development cooperation should make clear that Sweden prioritises support for the development of universal social protection, or programmes of universal nature.
- The Swedish Government and other relevant actors should initiate an in-depth discussion about universal social protection as a development strategy for lifting people out of poverty in low- and middle income countries. Key issues include how universal social protection programmes can and should be designed and implemented in different political and regional contexts, the importance of a universal approach in the establishment of new social programmes, and how existing, narrowly targeted social protection programmes over time can be expanded to become more universal.

# 1. Background

The rapid expansion of non-contributory social protection systems in Asia, Africa and Latin America is gaining attention in international development cooperation, due to the strong evidence of positive impacts demonstrated in current programmes. Social cash transfers have been proven in a multitude of countries and programme evaluations to improve people's nutrition, physical and mental health, education and productivity.<sup>2</sup> Whether the transfers come as family benefits or as old age pensions, people tend to spend the money on their children and grandchildren. People also use the cash transfers for long-term investments in livelihoods and productive assets.

A shift in perspective can be seen among economists and development practitioners, from previously having regarded social cash transfers as expenditure for short-term consumption, to treating social protection as a long-term investment in human development – a healthy and well-educated population is a precondition for sustainable economic growth.

Social protection systems can be designed in many different ways and each country must develop systems based on their own economic, social, historical and political circumstances. There are however some principal differences between two main models: targeted, selective social protection, such as the typical welfare

systems in Anglo-Saxon countries, and the universal welfare model, which predominates in Sweden and the other Nordic countries. Most of the programmes and systems underway in Latin America, Asia and Africa today are primarily targeted, but there are also examples of universal social protection reforms, particularly in the area of old age pensions.

The Swedish experience shows that strategic decisions in the initial stages of developing social protection systems may have a long-lasting impact on their design. At this time, when many countries are expanding their social protection systems, there are therefore reasons to share Sweden's lessons from building a universal welfare model.

Swedish knowledge and experience on these matters is also often requested from representatives from countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

Raising the idea about universal welfare in Sweden's development cooperation is not a way of putting new demands on low- and middle income countries, or about advising against all forms of targeted social protection. However, Sweden should draw attention to the benefits of universal social protection in the development cooperation dialogue.

**SOCIAL PROTECTION AND WELFARE – DIFFERING TERMINOLOGIES**

There is no commonly agreed definition of social protection. One reason is that the concept of social protection is partly shaped by the political and historical context of each region and culture. This makes it a challenge to find accurate translations between languages. For example, in Sweden and other Nordic countries, *social protection and welfare* are used synonymously, where *welfare* is defined broadly and understood as mostly universal in nature. In Anglo-Saxon countries, the term *welfare* has a much more narrow and negative connotation, related to poor-relief and means-testing.

In this report, **social protection** is used as a general term when referring to the concept in international development, while **welfare** may be used when talking specifically about the largely universal social protection systems in Sweden and other Nordic countries. **Social safety nets** is yet another term which denotes a more poverty-targeted approach to social protection, sometimes equated to social assistance (see below). *Social safety nets* only appears in this report where it is an established terminology within certain institutions, such as the World Bank.

Listed below are components frequently included in **social protection**.

Social protection consists of both **social security and social services**.

**Social security** in turn consists of various types of social (cash) transfers:

**Social insurance** is a contributory form of social security aimed to protect income earners and their dependants against a reduction or loss of income. Examples are contributory health insurance and pensions, as well as contributory unemployment insurance (in Swedish: *arbetslöshetskassa*).

**Social assistance** is means-tested benefits to persons who cannot support themselves or their dependants. The benefits are non-contributory and funded through government revenues. Examples are income support and housing support (in Swedish: *försörjningsstöd*).

**Social allowances** are universal payments financed from government revenue which are granted to all people within specific categories deemed to have higher needs (often during certain stages in life) such as children, elderly and persons with disabilities and chronic diseases. These benefits are not means-tested, non-contributory and funded through government revenues. Another name for them is “categorical transfers”. Examples are child grants and old age pensions.

**Social services** include access to education, health care, and other care services, for example for child care and elderly care.

**Labour market regulations** are legislation and agreements to guarantee basic rights for workers. For example minimum wage laws, workplace safety regulations, prohibition against child labour and collective bargaining.

**Public work programmes (PWP)** are a common component in social protection systems which support poor and food insecure people with social cash transfers/wages, conditional on the completion of a work requirement. PWPs are publically financed and often takes a community-based approach.

**FIGURE 1: DIFFERENT COMPONENTS OF SOCIAL PROTECTION:**



Additional components such as public transport, housing, access to clean water and electricity, etc. are also sometimes seen as parts of the social protection.

As already mentioned, the understanding of the different components of social protection differ between countries. In Sweden, *social insurances* are not necessarily financed by contributory fees by individuals. Swedish social insurance includes health care insurance financed by compulsory contributions by employers and by tax, and fully tax-funded benefits such as child allowances and housing allowances. The fact that in Sweden there is no strict differentiation between social allowances, social assistance and social insurance can be interpreted as an expression of the universal approach of the Swedish welfare system.

In other parts of the world, a stricter differentiation between social insurance, social allowances and social assistance is more common. It is also more common for social insurances to consist of only fully contribution-based programmes.

## 2. Purpose and method

The purpose of this report is to investigate and analyse to what extent *universal* social protection is promoted in Swedish development cooperation. Supporting the idea of universal social protection can in this context mean several things:

- That Sweden has contributed funding to development interventions that are promoting the development of universal social protection
- That the guidelines for Swedish development cooperation are clear on the issue of promoting universal social protection
- That Sweden has raised the issue of universal social protection in dialogue with partner countries and in international development arenas.

The report therefore covers Sweden's support both in form of financial and technical assistance as well as in influence through policy dialogue with partner countries and international organisations. The report provides a general overview of the extent to which Swedish development cooperation has promoted the idea of universal social protection. However, its aim has not been to give a detailed account for all Swedish development aid to social protection systems, nor to point out individual

projects that are in line with a universal approach, nor to review all of Sweden's guidelines and attempts to influence multilateral bodies.

The point of departure in the report is that there are major benefits with a social protection system that has a universal base. But the report does not claim that social protection systems have to be entirely universal.

The theoretical discussion in Part I is based on literature studies and interviews.

Part II in the Swedish version of this report features a number of interviews with key individuals in Swedish development cooperation. Some of the interviews have partially been reproduced in the English version while others have been used as background material.

The references at the end provide a list of the people interviewed. All the informants have been given the opportunity to review their own citations in the original version. In addition, a number of written documents have been reviewed, primarily guidelines for Swedish development cooperation and descriptions of funded projects.

## PART I: THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

## 3. What is universal social protection?

In general, a universal social protection system is distinguished by its emphasis on benefits that are not distributed through targeting and means-testing. This kind of system can include social security (non-contributory social insurance and social allowances such as pensions and child grants etc) as well as publicly funded social services (education, health care, child- and elderly care etc).

**A NOTE ON TARGETING AND MEANS-TESTING**

In this report the term “targeting” is used to signify the practice of selecting individuals or groups eligible for social protection benefits based on certain eligibility criteria. “Means-testing” refers to a commonly used method to target people living in poverty and vulnerability, by assessing their income, assets and household status. Hence, all means-tested social protection programmes are by definition targeted, but not all targeted social protection is necessarily means-tested (although much of it is), for example benefits for war veterans or some disability benefits.

Furthermore, targeted social protection is sometimes based on the idea that poverty is caused by individual failure rather than structural issues, or that it is possible to identify a particular group of people as ‘poor’, that is, that poverty is a characteristic of certain people rather than a condition that anyone can end up in.<sup>8</sup> Universal systems are instead based on the idea that certain phases in life always entail a greater risk of poverty. Consequently, they are designed to prevent people in these phases from ending up in poverty.

However, the division between universal and targeted social protection is not always clear. A more detailed categorisation of social protection has been developed by Danish sociologist Gøsta Esping-Andersen.<sup>4</sup> Esping-Andersen distinguishes between three different forms of social protection systems and names them as follows:

1. *The liberal system*, where it is primarily the market that distributes resources, social services and social security. Public social assistance is solely focused on cash transfers to the poorest in the community. The liberal system is also known as the Anglo-Saxon model, where the United Kingdom and the United States are typical examples.

2. *The conservative system*, where the state in cooperation with parties of the labour market (employers and labour unions) are responsible for social insurances and other social security, organised by occupation. The role of the family is strongly emphasised in the conservative system. In order for the system to work, women’s participation in the labour market must be low, which is also subsidised by a joint taxation system. The majority of social services are performed as unpaid domestic work and the public service sector is small. This system is sometimes called the German model because it developed during the Bismarck period in Germany, at the end of the nineteenth century.

3. *The social democratic system* where social security is provided and operated by the state. Social insurance is mainly income-related but differ from the conservative model in that there is both a minimum level of guaranteed compensation, and also an upper limit for the compensation amount. Social services are primarily tax-funded, publicly run and available for all. Taxes and benefits are individual and women have a high level of participation in the workforce. This system is also called the Nordic or Scandinavian model.

Of these models, the third contain the most features of universal social protection, even if this system also has means-tested elements: in the case of Sweden, social assistance and housing assistance for pensioners are examples of means-tested benefits. The intention is that the means-tested benefits should be supplements – not substitutes – to universal benefits.

Esping Andersen’s typology have received criticism with regards to its ability to cater for new welfare types developing in the non-Western world, which has resulted in additional welfare typologies as well as new criteria to categorise social protection systems.<sup>5</sup> For example, social protection benefits are sometimes divided into voluntary programmes (such as the Swedish unemployment insurance), benefits targeting groups with special needs (such as support for those living with HIV) and benefits that are income-related (such as the Swedish housing assistance). Benefits can also be categorized by who is entitled to them, for example, by citizenship or residency in the country.

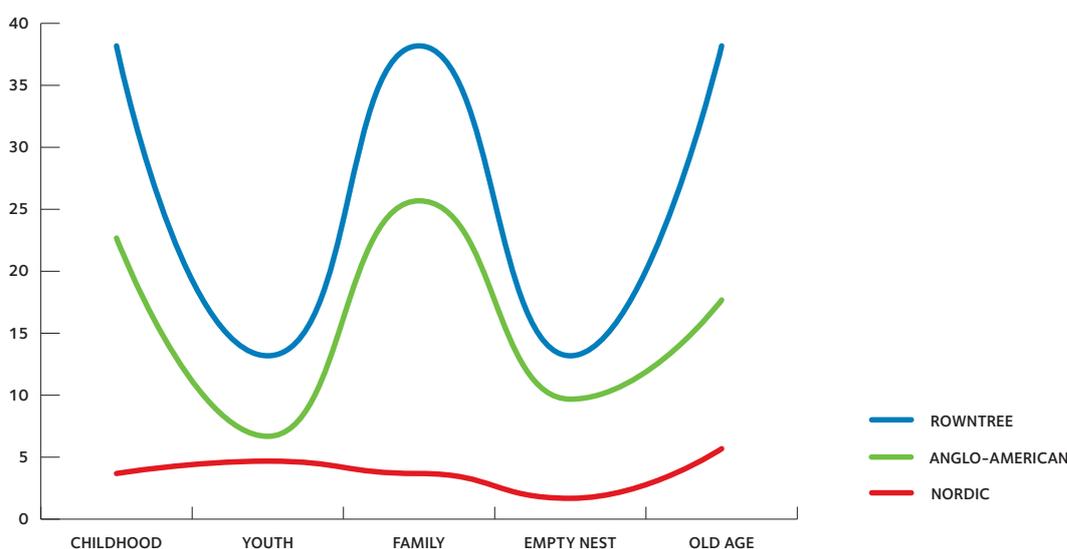
## 4. Benefits with universal social protection – and some of the counter-arguments

Along with the other Nordic countries, Sweden was a pioneer in universal social protection. In this capacity, Sweden has valuable knowledge and experience to offer. The advantages of universal social protection are summarised below:

### 1. Reduces poverty effectively

Comprehensive comparative welfare research<sup>6</sup> shows that universal social protection systems reduce poverty more effectively than narrowly targeted and means-tested systems do, see figure 2. One reason is that universal social protection systems – contrary to common belief

– tend to be more redistributive than targeted systems. Universal systems generally have a larger budget than targeted systems and are thereby more redistributive in absolute numbers, although the targeted systems are more redistributive when calculated as a percentage of the spending. Or expressed differently: the more we target benefits exclusively to the poorest, the lower the actual amount of the benefits will be, and the less helpful they will be in lifting people out of poverty. Sociologists have called this phenomenon the redistribution paradox.<sup>7</sup>



**FIGURE 2. MODELS FOR LIFECYCLE-BASED SOCIAL PROTECTION**

The figure shows how the relative poverty rate changes over a lifecycle in the Nordic welfare model and in a more liberally inspired model. For comparative purposes, the relative poverty rate in York at the end of the 1800s is also stated (retrieved from a classic sociological study of lifecycle-based poverty by Seebohm Rowntree from 1901). The highest poverty rate occurs in the most vulnerable phases in life: childhood, early parenthood, and old age. The curves show that the universal Nordic welfare model evens out lifecycle-related poverty, in contrast to the much more poverty-focused Anglo-Saxon model. The Nordic model also reduces the overall poverty level more effectively. Source: CMI (2014) A Recipe For a Better Life: Experiences From the Nordic Countries.

## 2. Increases chances of reaching all

Not even the most sophisticated targeting methods for identifying those entitled to benefits are infallible. Social protection systems based on means-testing will therefore always include people who were not the intended recipients of the benefits. And what is worse, they will exclude individuals and groups who really ought to be included. There is a much greater chance of reaching all those who are poor if the system is universal.<sup>9</sup> Figure 3 shows that the coverage rate is important in order for poor people to benefit from social protection programmes.

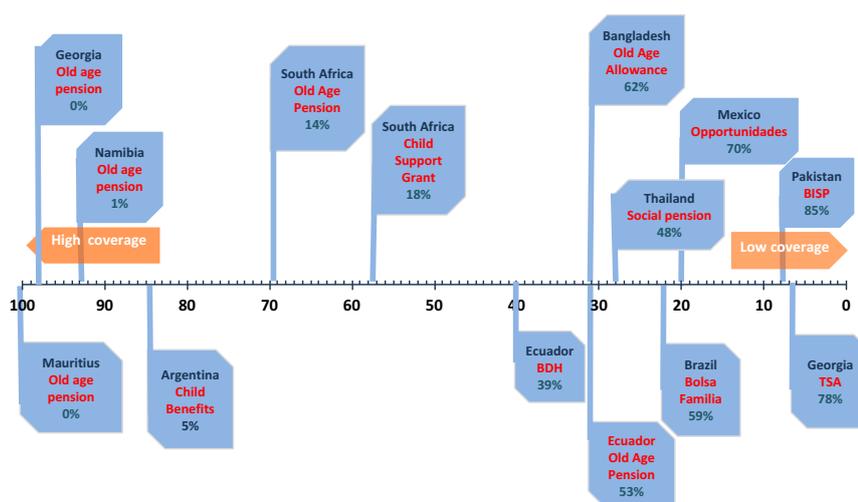
## 3. Avoids perverse incentives

Targeting can also impact on beneficiaries’ behaviour in an undesirable way. People who receive benefits may start to adapt in order to avoid the risk of being excluded from the programme. They might refrain from getting a tin roof, if this is an indicator of income which deems them not entitled to benefits, or take down the curtains before inspection visits, if having curtains is a criterion for a particular accommodation standard that would exclude them from a means-tested social protection programme. This results in the “wrong” people getting access to a variety of benefits, and it can also have significant impacts on the economy.

Universal social protection does not create any incentives for recipients to reduce their own efforts in order to increase their income. The Swedish child allowance is a good example of this. If the child allowance was only given to low-income families, parents who work part-time or are unemployed would have less incentive to increase their working hours or to look for work, because the increase in their income would be lower if the (means-tested) child allowance was decreased or cut off entirely. In public debate in Sweden, this phenomenon is referred to as “marginal effects”.

## 4. Reduces administrative costs and risks of arbitrariness

With universal social protection, a number of problems and risks that are associated with targeting are avoided. Targeting (through assessment of individuals’ and households’ income and assets) is in itself expensive, which increases the transaction costs of benefits. Furthermore, criteria for the eligibility are often politically controversial. The (political) power to select certain beneficiaries also makes targeted social protection programmes prone to arbitrariness, corruption and abuse of power.



**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COVERAGE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF A SAMPLE OF SOCIAL SECURITY SCHEMES, MEASURED AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE POOREST 20% OF THE SELECTED CATEGORY OF RECIPIENTS WHO ARE EXCLUDED.**

Source: Stephen Kidd, Rethinking “Targeting” in International Development, Pathways Perspectives on social policy in International Development, Issue No 11, October 2013.

## 5. Strengthens political consensus and ensures high quality services

The fact that universal systems target everyone in a society increases the chances of reaching political consensus around them (universal social protection ensures the support of the middle class). Public support for universal social protection has been shown to be significantly higher than for targeted cash transfers and means-tested interventions.<sup>11</sup> This means that it is easier to gain legitimacy for the taxes used for universal social protection than for targeted schemes, which is one explanation for the 'redistribution paradox'. Universal social protection also contributes to the sustainability and predictability of state institutions, which promotes economic growth.

A related point that applies both to social security and to social services is the possibility to achieve high quality. A fundamental principle of universal social protection is that public services – schools, health care and social care – should be of such high standard that everyone wants to use them. The link between universal programmes and higher quality is well expressed by the economist Amartya Sen:

*“Benefits meant exclusively for the poor people often end up being poor benefits”.*<sup>12</sup>

## 6. Curbs social stigma and enhances citizenship and state-building

Universal social protection also avoid the social stigma that may arise from targeted benefits. Means-testing is often perceived as humiliating and shameful for the people that have to undergo the poverty assessments. Targeted systems may also impair social cohesion between individuals and groups. Selecting the poorest people in communities where almost everyone is in need may lead to conflicts between those who receive benefits and those who do not, especially when the selection criteria is not easily understood.<sup>10</sup>

Lastly, there are strong indications that universal systems are better than targeted systems in strengthening a sense of citizenship and unity in the society, as well as trust in state authorities and in fellow human beings.<sup>13</sup> This may be explained by the fact that everyone, in certain phases of life (including the middle class) is covered by the system on equal terms and people are not targeted in ways experienced as arbitrary and humiliating.

Furthermore, a string of other problems associated with targeting which may impair a sense of citizenship and belonging are avoided (see point 4).<sup>14</sup>

In addition, the technological development create new opportunities for introducing universal social cash transfers. In particular, mobile phones and smart cards are used to transfer benefits to individuals and households. Many poorer countries lack comprehensive registers and statistics of households and individuals. By strengthening universal social protection schemes, the collection of data for population registers, ID-certificates and national statistics is therefore supported.

### Targeted benefits a necessary supplement

Despite strong arguments for universal social protection, it is almost always necessary to supplement universal systems with certain forms of targeted support to those whose needs cannot be covered by general social protection benefits. This may comprise of assistance to people who have a long-term illness or a disability or who are unemployed, where some form of assessment is necessary. The categorization of universal or targeted welfare is therefore not clear-cut. Rather, the question is where the emphasis should lie (see chapter 5).

### But is it not too expensive?

An often heard objection to universal social protection systems is that they are too expensive for many low- and middle income countries. It is true that really poor countries cannot always afford to introduce a universal child grant, given their young populations. The ILO has calculated the cost of universal minimum pensions and a universal child allowance in a number of low-income countries. Old-age pensions would cost 1–2 per cent of GDP, the child allowance 2–3 per cent of GDP.<sup>15</sup> These figures are significantly lower than the corresponding levels in Europe, but could still be burdensome for some governments since tax revenues in many low-income country are low – on average around 15% of GDP.<sup>16</sup>

But all countries have the possibility of starting small and expanding the systems as fiscal space grows. It is also almost always possible to increase existing tax revenues, as well as to redirect inefficient public expenditure. For example, Mozambique's government phased out a fuel subsidy which did not benefit the poorest in favour of a social protection programme.<sup>17</sup> Universal

social protection systems are also less administratively costly than targeted social protection, since the eligibility criteria are much easier to assess.

The pursuit of cost-effectiveness seems to have led several actors in the international development arena to favour targeted systems, most notably the World Bank

(read more in chapter 9). If the needs are enormous and resources greatly limited, it seems logical that benefits should be targeted to those most in need. However, this argument is based on a static view of tax revenues – in contrast to the research which shows that broad-based or universal systems generate a greater popularity and thereby larger tax revenues over time.

## 5. Universal social protection in global development

Conditions in low- and middle income countries differ in many ways from higher income countries, in particular because the majority of their populations are part of the informal sector and relying on arrangements within the family, clan and community for social protection. At the same time, many parallels can be drawn to Sweden at the time when public social protection systems began to be developed here.

Categorisation of social protection systems within academic disciplines has traditionally derived from welfare systems in higher income countries (see Esping-Andersen's typology in chapter 3). Less attention have been devoted to whether these categories are applicable in low- and middle income countries, although, as with the topic of social protection in general, interest in this area is rising. Geoff Wood and Ian Gough have proposed an adapted categorisation of social protection systems for low- and middle income countries, based on three regime types: the welfare state regime, informal security regime, and insecurity regime. This typology takes into account colonial and post-colonial influence, and the impact of path dependency, without assuming that globalization reproduces a homogeneity of modern social systems. It sheds light on a wider range of actors concerning social policy initiatives, not only confined to the state.<sup>18</sup>

We do not know enough about what universal social protection systems in low- and middle income countries might end up looking like, nor what the processes for arriving there will entail. But there are good reasons for studying how such systems are developed.

In investigating whether Swedish development aid is used to support universal social protection, the answer differs depending on whether the question concerns universal social security (cash transfers) alone, or if public social services are also included in the analysis. Concerning only universal social security, a relatively small (but growing) portion of Sweden's development aid is directed to this. On the other hand, a much more substantial part of development aid is allocated to universal social services. This result is not surprising, since health care and education have long been important parts of development cooperation, and consequently policy

strategies for this support are further advanced than for support social security (cash transfers).

At the same time, there is a close link between universal social security and universal social services such as schools and medical care. Firstly, the ideological foundation is similar. In both cases, the aim is to guarantee social protection for all people, that is, in the form of a rights-based approach. Secondly, the systems support each other. For example, investments in universal education mean that people have better opportunities to provide for themselves later in life, which in turn creates an economic base for universal social security. Another example is that social security in form of different kinds of cash transfers give children better chances of benefiting from an education and of accessing health clinics.

### Universal, targeted and a whole lot of in-betweens

It is not always obvious how to categorise social protection systems in terms of universality. A starting point is of course that systems addressed to all individuals or households, without any form of means-testing, are universal. However, universal designs can be deviated from in several ways:

**CATEGORICAL SOCIAL PROTECTION.** Some benefits target certain age categories, such as old age pensions and child grants. In Sweden, these types of allowances are regarded as universal, categorical benefits – there is no subjective assessment, since everyone in a certain age group is entitled to the same benefit. A precondition for avoiding subjective age assessments are of course a comprehensive system of civil registration and identity documentation, something which is lacking in many low- and middle income countries.

**GENDER TARGETED SOCIAL PROTECTION.** Categorical targeting can also include benefits and services targeted according to gender, in most instances this generally means social protection schemes specifically targeted to women. It is common practice that micro loans are given to women to start businesses and social cash transfers directed to women are also becoming increasingly popular in low- and middle income countries as well, especially when the

transfers are designed as child- and family allowances. The Swedish child grant was for many decades targeted to mothers, and is currently still given to the mother if parents do not register how they want to share it.

**POVERTY/VULNERABILITY TARGETING.** A common restriction of social protection is poverty or vulnerability targeting, where benefits are directed to people whose income is below a certain level (through means-testing), to farmers without access to land, to those who are living with HIV, to those who are unemployed or living with a disability. These forms of cash transfers are not universal but some of them may be needed to supplement universal programmes for people in certain vulnerable situations (for example people living with disability or with HIV).

The way targeting in social protection systems is designed decides to what degree such systems differ from universal systems. The degree of transparency and the clarity of the rules in the system, which minimises subjective assessment and the risk of abuse of power and corruption, are crucial.

Another crucial issue concerns the long-term aim of the social protection scheme. Is the idea that the scheme will be a complement in a larger universal system? Or that it will be expanded gradually over time to become increasingly universal in nature? In that case, the ambitions lie close to the ideological foundations of universal social protection. In the international development discourse, this is often expressed by asking to what extent a social protection system has a *transformative* ambition?<sup>19</sup> If the aim is in fact to develop a social protection system that will solely target the poorest, the long-term purpose behind it is quite different: to establish a permanently means-tested system.

**GRADUATION.** Graduation (in social protection terminology) follows as a consequence from means-testing. It refers to when beneficiaries are leaving a social protection programme after being deemed to have reached a certain threshold of capacity and wellbeing. The objective with graduation in social protection schemes is to enable beneficiaries' movement out of extreme poverty and towards self-sustainment through economic activity, rather than to provide a continuous floor of social security. Most means-tested schemes therefore include a graduation process, where cash transfers usually are coupled with productive assets, access to savings facilities, livelihood training and job coaching. Typical types of ben-

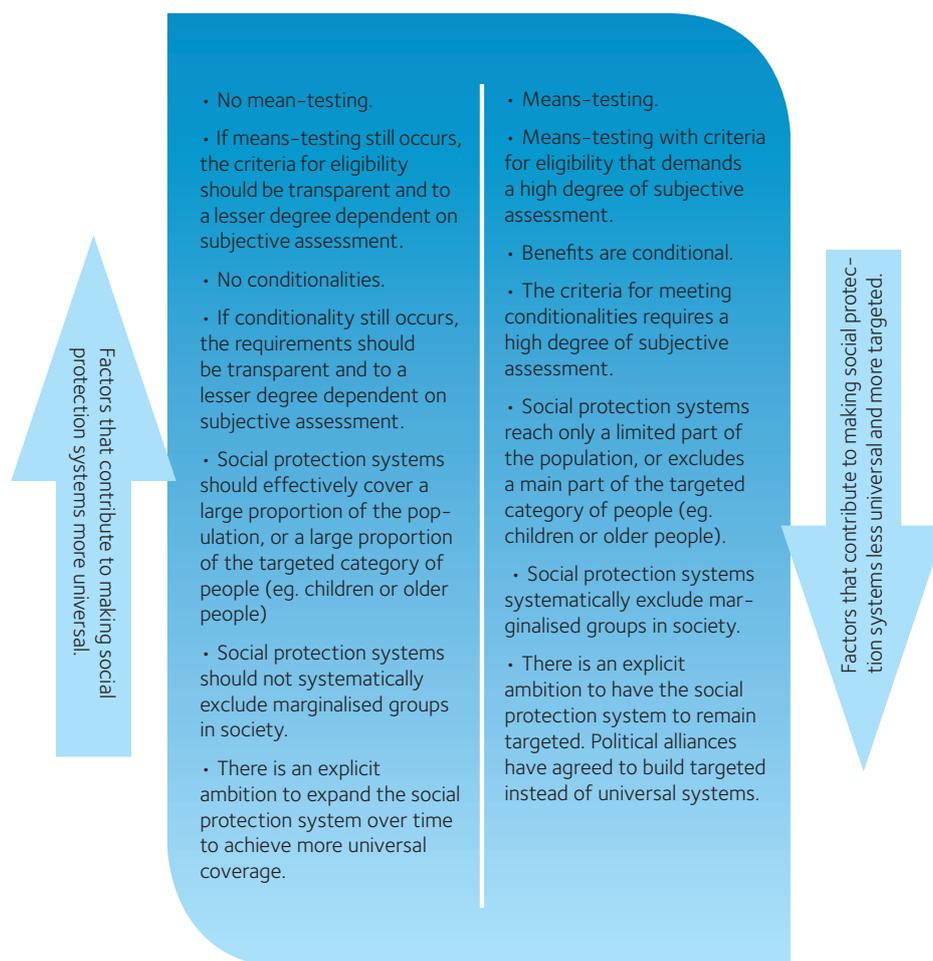
efits with graduation design are unemployment benefits. Social protection schemes with graduation are often an important component in universal social protection systems, but they should not displace the core universal social protection functions of basic social security.

**CONDITIONAL BENEFITS.** Another form of restriction of universal social protection are conditional benefits. Common conditions are that children in the household are required to go to school or that benefits are only paid to those who have been vaccinated. Conditional benefits cannot be regarded as fully universal, although here too, some systems may be of more or less universal nature. The issue of transparency is crucial, since control trials of clear and easily demonstrated conditions are less subjective.

**COVERAGE.** A crucial aspect of determining whether or not benefits can be viewed as universal is how big part of the population that is included. The more people that are excluded – either as a result of strict means-testing and conditioning or because of lack of information on what benefits people are entitled to and how to access them, as well as lack of access to schools and health care – the further away the system is from being universal. Consequently, what is crucial here is not only how the system is designed in theory but also how it is implemented in practice. Existing social service infrastructure, as well as the situation of discrimination and marginalisation in the society, are important factors.

In conclusion, there is a scale along which social protection systems can be deemed more or less universal. Fully universal systems are not means-tested and have no conditions attached to the benefits. They target the entire population or certain age categories, such as children or pensioners. Close to these are benefits that universally address all women. At the other end of the scale are systems that cannot be regarded as universal at all. These are means-tested systems solely targeting the poorest, and conditional systems that exclude large segments of the population or certain marginalised and poor groups.

Between these two extremes, there are targeted social protection systems in which the criteria are transparent and which benefit many people; and conditional systems that cover a large part of the population and which do not specifically exclude marginalised groups. Figure 4 shows the factors that characterize universal versus targeted social protection systems.



**FIGURE 4. FACTORS DETERMINING WHETHER A SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM CAN BE CATEGORIZED AS MORE OR LESS UNIVERSAL.** Social protection systems can be universal to various degrees. The figure shows some of the central factors that make the systems more or less universal.

When development cooperation is analysed from these perspectives, the differences are great depending on where the focus lies. Relatively few interventions are about supporting universal social security systems in their pure form, while significantly more are in the grey zone, since they both include some universal and some targeted features.

This report focus on social security in form of cash transfers, and to some extent on social services. However, the universal aspect of social protection applies as well for labour market policies, regulations and agreements, where an important factor is the proportion of workers which the labour policies cover. This is manifested in comprehensive public works programmes, such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

(NREGA) in India, where all households in rural areas have legal right to a minimum of hundred days of paid work per year. In the peak during 2009–10, 54 million households participated in this programme, corresponding to one quarter of Indian households in rural areas.<sup>20</sup>

A major obstacle to the implementation of collective bargaining agreements and minimum wages is that the proportion of those involved in the informal labour market in general is higher the poorer a country is. Therefore, in countries such as Bangladesh and Cambodia, legislation on minimum wages and collective agreements encompasses only about ten percent of all workers. However, such systems can be of strategic value where there is an industrialisation process occurring and the proportion of workers in the formal sector is gradually rising.

### Key examples of universal social protection reforms in low- and middle income countries

Some social protection reforms in particular are highlighted in this review, partly because they are universal and partly because they are on the agenda in a number of low- and middle income countries. These include:

- Universal pensions
- Universal child grants
- Minimum wages

As previously mentioned, publicly financed social services are also part of a universal social protection system. These include:

- Free education
- State-subsidised care services, such as child care and elderly care
- Medical care provided at low cost or free of charge

A crucial question in this context is how many that actually have access to these services, and whether certain marginalised and vulnerable groups are systematically excluded. Another crucial issue is the level of ambition set for social services. If there is a long-term plan to gradually expand access to schools, health care and social care, to gradually cover the entire population, even limited reforms may be deemed universal in nature, as they are a step towards a more comprehensive system.

As mentioned above, employment protection legislation and agreements (such as collective bargaining agreements) are also included in social protection systems. In this study however, these types of measures will get limited attention. The main focus will be on social security and to some extent publicly funded social services such as schools, health care and social care. In concrete terms, this means a focus on universal pensions, child grants and proposals concerning basic income, but public social services and the issue of minimum wage will be addressed to some extent.

#### BASIC INCOME GRANT

The proposal of a Basic Income Grant (BIG) (in Sweden often referred to as a basic income or citizen wage, "*basinkomst*" eller "*medborgarlön*") constitutes the purest example of a universal social protection system. So far no such system has been nationally implemented in any substantial amounts, although local pilot projects have been carried out in a number of countries, for example in Namibia and India. Among current pilot projects,<sup>21</sup> one is implemented by the NGO Give Directly in Kenya, where almost 20 000 inhabitants will get a basic income for either two or twelve years, making it the largest basic income pilot in the world so far.<sup>22</sup> There are many similarities, but also some differences, between the debate in Europe on a basic income, and the lively debate on BIG in low- and middle income countries, for example in Southern Africa. The debate in Europe and the US is often sprung from criticism of the prevailing waged work-paradigm in the wake of automation, and while the debate in Southern Africa also concerns mass-unemployment of particularly youth, great emphasis is also put on the potential of reducing the deep inequalities persisting in the region. The amount of a basic income grant advocated for in Namibia and South Africa are much lower both in absolute and relative numbers compared to the European proposals for a basic income.

The report applies a number of stipulative definitions:

- Universal social protection are systems that are not means-tested or conditional, and that reach all citizens or all within a specific category such as all children, all parents, or all pensioners.
- Social protection is 'universal in nature' if any means- or needs- testing and conditions are transparent, the need for subjective assessment of eligibility is minimal, benefits and services reach a large part of the population, and if marginalised groups in the society are not systematically excluded.
- Universal social services refers to schools, health care and social care that reaches the whole, or a large part, of the population.
- Universal social protection also includes reforms for minimum wages/universal collective agreements and basic income grants.
- Targeted social security refers to cash transfers that solely target poor and vulnerable sections of the population. Targeted benefits can be based on for example income, wealth, land ownership or health status.

## PART II: UNIVERSAL SOCIAL PROTECTION IN SWEDISH DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

## 6. Social protection in international development cooperation and sustainable development debate

According to Göran Holmqvist\*, Swedish expert on social protection, at present at UNICEF, there is a rapidly growing interest for social protection systems within the international development arena, including in Swedish development cooperation. He points to concrete examples in which Sweden has been involved in recent years in sub-Saharan Africa, although these are not universal social protection systems but rather means-tested benefits targeting sections of the population in specific areas.

Virtually every Sub-Saharan African country have some form of social cash transfer programme today, and many of them are rapidly expanding in coverage, although most of them are still means-tested and targeted towards the poorest people in the poorest areas. Unlike in Latin America, many of the benefit schemes in Africa are not conditional upon school attendance or visits to the health clinic, says Göran Holmqvist. These kinds of conditions can be problematic for a number of reasons, since poor and vulnerable people in rural areas may not always have access to schools and health care, and because these demands place further stress on administrative capacity of monitoring and controlling beneficiaries.

Some African countries, particularly those classified as lower middle- or middle income countries, have already set up various forms of social protection systems that cover large parts of the population. Göran Holmqvist mentions for example that pensions and/or child grants already exist in countries such as South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho, Swaziland and Mauritius and since a year back, also in Zanzibar. Neither Sweden nor other donors have been particularly involved in supporting these programmes (except Zanzibar). They have rather grown out of domestic debate and with domestic funding.

Few of these systems are entirely universal. For example, in South Africa there is a means-test for the old age pension, but the eligibility criteria (income limit) still includes about 80 per cent of the elderly – a large proportion of the population in this category.

Göran Holmqvist is also of the opinion that universal social security systems can be costly for poor countries, even if there are administrative advantages in making the systems universal.

The cost of a universal child allowance that lasts up to the age of 15 corresponds roughly to 3–4 percent of GDP in an African low-income country, while a basic pension may correspond to roughly one per cent of GDP.<sup>23</sup> Child allowances are more expensive as a result of the countries' demographic structure.

Göran Holmqvist returns to the advantages of introducing universal and simply framed social benefits, but also thinks it unnecessary to focus too hard on absolute universality in social protection.

What is crucial is that the systems address a large part of the population and that the eligibility criteria are transparent and easy to understand. Often, such systems can also function as a first step towards a more universal solution. An important rule of thumb should be that the simplicity and transparency of the system is such that a beneficiary can easily understand if and why he or she is eligible or not for a specific benefit.

Göran Holmqvist is convinced that opportunities exist today to bring forward positions on universal social protection in international development cooperation, not the least because many low- and middle income

\* Göran Holmqvist is Associate Director of the UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, in Florence, Italy since 2012. Its research includes monitoring and evaluating the growing number of social protection programmes in Africa. Göran Holmqvist has previously written about social protection in his work at the Nordic Africa Institute and in his thesis *Perspectives on Inequality and Social Protection* (University of Gothenburg, 2011). Göran Holmqvist has also held various leadership positions in the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), including as its interim Director General.

countries are raising this issue themselves. Similarly, Sweden's development cooperation and its *Policy for Global Development* (Politik för Global Utveckling) have taken significant steps forward the last years in support of social protection, although not significantly for universal social protection in particular.

Göran Holmqvist is also of the view that there are actors who prefer more narrowly targeted social protection systems.

“These can be systems that narrowly target poverty or strictly conditional benefits. Representatives at the

World Bank's country offices in particular have often seemed to recommend conditional benefits. In World Bank supported programmes, there is often a requirement that children attend school, but this means that poor people who live in areas where there are no functioning schools risk falling outside the system. UNICEF's policy for social protection would like to see social protection systems striving towards becoming more universal, and in that way more human rights-based. Social protection should not either risk creating a social stigma for individuals or groups in the society.”<sup>24</sup>

#### CONCLUSIONS IN GÖRAN HOLMQVIST'S THESIS

Göran Holmqvist's thesis “Perspectives on Inequality and Social Protection” (University of Gothenburg, 2011)

Holmqvist notes that many social protection schemes in low- and middle income countries were initiated as emergency relief in connection with economic crises: in Latin America in the 1990s, in Asia in the early 2000s, and in Ethiopia after the famines. In some cases, international development aid has been used to finance part of these efforts, but that is the exception. However, if social protection systems are going to be able to grow everywhere, support from the rest of the world is needed. Low-income countries will not be able to provide all the initial funding themselves.

Critics have warned of undesirable effects of cash transfers. When South Africa introduced their child grant in the 1990s, a major concern in media was that the system would become an incentive for families to have even more children. This fear have turned out to not be true, as demonstrated in several impact evaluations. One way of further counteracting this *potential* effect is to simultaneously introduce old age

pensions, since for the majority of people living in poverty, children are their only social security in old age. One of the most important results in Holmqvist's thesis is a statistical analysis of the effects of the pension systems in a number of sub-Saharan African countries; an analysis showing that better pensions leads to a reduction in birth rate.

Budget and capacity support to governments to establish social protection is something in between targeted interventions and general budgetary aid. It entails a certain level of control of the funds, but without micromanagement. Holmqvist notes in his thesis, not surprisingly, that this kind of development aid has worked particularly well when social protection programmes have had strong domestic political and popular support, but less well when driven by international donors. One conclusion is therefore that social protection systems in low- and middle income-countries must be primarily financed and initiated by the countries themselves, but that aid from abroad can help to successfully establish them.

#### BOLSA FAMILIA IN BRAZIL

The Brazilian family allowance *Bolsa Familia* reaches about 14 million households – corresponding to 46 million individuals – targeting families with low income. For families living in extreme poverty, the allowance amounts to the equivalent of 30 USD per month and on top of this, children up to 16 years who are vaccinated and attend school receive an additional allowance of approximately 13 USD. For 16- and 17-year-olds attending school, the additional allowance is approximately 16

USD. *Bolsa Familia* is thus a poverty-targeted benefit, which nonetheless reaches a relatively broad majority and accounts for just 0.5 % of Brazil's GDP. The means-testing in itself generates additional costs, and can undermine the legitimacy of the system.<sup>25</sup>

Source: *What are Social Transfers?* (2014) Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme.

### Criticism of Bolsa Familia and similar schemes

The conditional and poverty targeted social protection schemes that have been introduced in Latin American countries in particular in the last decades are generally viewed as great successes, but they have also received criticism from both political and academic spheres. The problematic sides of means-testing and conditioning has been brought up, as well as concerns of welfare-dependency and “undeserving poor”. Sociologist Johan Sandberg\* thinks that the picture that is communicated of *Bolsa Familia* in Brazil, and of similar systems in other countries in Latin America, has generally been too idealised:

– *Bolsa Familia* has certainly meant a great deal for individual households, but empirical evidence for the impact that the system has had at society level is weak. *Bolsa Familia* has reduced poverty in the short term and the programme has had an alleviating effect for the most vulnerable. But there is no evidence that *Bolsa Familia* has contributed to a long-term reduction in poverty. We can also see that school dropout rates remain at a consistently high level.

According to Johan Sandberg, one problem is that schools are often of poor quality. It then becomes difficult to motivate students to attend school, even if households receive benefits conditioned on keeping their children in school.

– If this type of cash transfer is to have any lasting impact, it must be combined with other interventions. There are many factors that contribute to the creation of chronic poverty, such as unequal education, residential segregation and marginalisation in the labour market. So we cannot expect that cash transfers to poor families will be a quick fix.

Johan Sandberg believes that more universal systems of social transfers and social insurance could reduce the risk of stigmatisation. But this requires politicians with the courage to invest real money.

– Not even in Uruguay, where there is a radical government, has it been possible to get a majority to back such an idea.

Another critique towards *Bolsa Familia* and similar schemes, such as the Mexican programme PROSPERA (previously *Oportunidades*), is that benefits specifically targeted towards the poor are more vulnerable to cutbacks than universal benefits, which tend to enjoy a greater support from the general population. This circumstance is now evident in Brazil, where the future of the *Bolsa Familia* programme is uncertain, due to lack of political support and also due to the fact that *Bolsa Familia*, as is the case with many social protection schemes now developing in low- and middle income countries, is not grounded in law.

– In Brazil and Mexico, a clear distinction is made between the rich and the poor. Public social assistance systems are for the poor, while the richer are included in contributory social security systems, demanding employment in the formal sector. In terms of sustainable social policy development, such a one-sided emphasis on poverty eradication is problematic.

#### EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL PROTECTION IN SOME AFRICAN COUNTRIES

Today, there are various types of social protection programmes targeted towards people living in poverty and vulnerability in many African countries. With time however, a number of these programmes have been broadened to cover larger parts of the populations. This way the programmes may be a first step towards more universal social protection systems.

**SOUTH AFRICA:** The Child Support Grant in South Africa amounts to roughly 29 USD per month. The child grant is means-tested and is only given to children in low-income households. The eligibility requirements are however quite generous, hence almost 11 million children, or more than half of all children under the age of 18, currently receive the grant through their caretakers. Studies show that risky sexual behaviour among young people has declined as a result of receiving the child grant and it has also led to a reduction in HIV-transmission.<sup>26</sup> The child grant is financed through taxes and corresponds to 3.5% of South Africa's GDP.

**LESOTHO:** The Old Age Pension (OAP) is a non-contributory scheme, introduced in 2005. The pension is paid to all citizens over 70 years and the amount is roughly equivalent to 40 USD per month.<sup>27</sup> The pension has been introduced without any international development aid and is financed by taxes through the national budget. Similar pension schemes are set up in eight other African countries.\*\*

\* Johan Sandberg is a senior lecturer at the Department of Sociology at Lund University who has done extensive research on social protection.

\*\* Botswana, Cape Verde, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, and Zanzibar.

**ZIMBABWE:** The Harmonised Social Cash Transfer (HSCT) is an unconditional cash transfer program targeted to ultra-poor households who are labor constrained. It is the flagship social protection programme of the Government of Zimbabwe's new National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF). The HSCT is jointly funded by the Government of Zimbabwe and bilateral development partners including DFID, Sida and Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), through the multi-donor aligned Child Protection Fund managed by UNICEF, which also provide technical assistance.<sup>28</sup>

**ZAMBIA:** Zambia's Social Cash Transfer (SCT) programme has been operating since 2003. In 2017, the Zambian government announced a nation-wide scale-up of the programme and the number of beneficiaries more than doubled from 242,000 to 590,000 in less than a year. About two thirds of the costs for the SCT comes from the Zambian government, and one third is funded by the World Bank and bilateral development partners (Sida, DFID, IrishAid).<sup>29</sup> The SCT consists of a number of cash transfer pilots brought together under a single programme. One of the schemes in SCT is a Child Grant, initiated in 2010, which provides a monthly cash payment to all mothers with a child under the age of five in selected districts with very high poverty and child mortality rates. The overall objective of the Child Grant Programme (CGP) is to reduce poverty and the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

**MOZAMBIQUE:** The Basic Social Subsidy Programme (PSSB), part of Mozambique's National Basic Social Security Strategy (ENSSB), is a cash transfer programme targeted to poor households where no one is able to provide for the family. Prioritised groups are the elderly, people with disabilities, the chronically ill and undernourished, and pregnant women. Mozambique's social protection programmes are partly financed by international development donors. However, the government has increased the fiscal space for

social protection from 0.18% of GDP in 2008 to 0.50% in 2016; and expanded the number of beneficiaries covered by basic social protection programmes from 183,000 households in 2008 to almost 500,000 in 2016. The government is also planning to shift the unit of eligibility from household level to the individual.<sup>30</sup>

**TANZANIA:** The cash transfer program Productive Social Safety Net (PSSN) is implemented by Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF) in rural and semi-urban Tanzania. At present, it is mainly funded by the World Bank and bilateral development partners (DFID, Sida), channeled through the Tanzanian government. PSSN is a targeted and conditional social protection programme which serves poor households through providing them with a bi-monthly cash transfer worth between 9 and 21 USD. The amount can be increased upon fulfillment of certain conditions (children's attendance in school and health-checks at the clinic). It also provides beneficiaries with the opportunity to earn additional income through a Public Works Programme (PWP) and livelihood interventions. The targeting process in PSSN uses a mix of community-based selection of the poorest and proxy means tests carried out by TASAF.<sup>31</sup>

**KENYA:** Kenya has gradually expanded various social schemes into a National Social Safety Net Program (NSNP),<sup>32</sup> including cash transfers targeted to older people, orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs), people living with disability, and hunger relief in vulnerable areas. Since 2014, Kenya's government has increased its financing of the NSNP, marking a shift from the previous heavy financing by development partners such as the World Bank, DFID, Sida (through UNICEF). In 2017, the Kenyan government announced a nation-wide introduction of a universal old age pension from 2018.

For a comprehensive overview of non-contributory social protection programmes in Africa: Social Protection in Africa: Inventory of non-contributory programmes by UNDP.<sup>33</sup>

## 7. Universal social protection in policies for Sweden's development cooperation

Do current policies and guidelines for Sweden's development cooperation give support to promotion of universal social protection, and to make use of Swedish experiences of a universal welfare model in this context? As mentioned in previous chapters, this review focus on the issue of social security (cash transfers) but do also concern social services as part of social protection. The review finds clear support of the idea of promoting universal social protection and make Swedish experiences in the Government Bill Shared Responsibility: Sweden's Policy for Global Development,<sup>34</sup> which includes a section about social development and social security:

### 5.4.6 Social development and social security The Government's assessment:

*Sweden should make efforts to ensure that sustainable development is characterized by equitable distribution. Measures should be taken to promote broad and active participation by civil society in decision-making. Sweden's experience of social security policies should be utilized in realizing the purposes and goal of the policy for global development.*

/.../

*A policy for social development and social security strengthens people in their struggle against poverty. It must be universal, based on broad and active participation in civil society and adapted to the conditions prevailing in each society.*

/.../

*Therefore, Sweden should also support the building up of social security systems that can both enhance people's own capacity, and also provide support and protection for people in precarious situations. Social welfare and security policy in Sweden is closely linked to economic policy. Although ready-made models cannot be exported, we have throughout our modern history devised programmes and acquired experiences that justify a special Swedish commitment to and active involvement in this area.*

The Policy for Global Development has recently been reinforced in the Government's written communication *Politiken för global utveckling i genomförandet av Agenda 2030*<sup>35</sup> where support to social protection is highlighted as a good example of how Sweden through its policy for global development can contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Social protection is highlighted as a good example of working with Goal 1) *No Poverty*, with linkages to Goal 5) *Gender Equality* and Goal 10) *Reduced Inequality*. While not explicitly mentioning universal social protection, the communication sets an ambition that Sweden shall actively contribute to the global discussion around broad and inclusive social protection systems and offer technical advice on how to design social protection systems based on Swedish experiences of a general welfare model. The communication also emphasizes that social protection is a human right, and refers to the ILO Recommendation 202 on Social Protection Floors (read further in chapter 9). The previous *Aid policy framework*<sup>36</sup> from 2014 and the current *Policy framework for Sweden's development cooperation*<sup>37</sup> from 2016 also includes statements about the role of social protection in Sweden's international development cooperation. Although the issue of *universal* social protection is not explicitly mentioned in any of these frameworks, the current framework integrates access to social protection in the general analysis for poverty eradication, gender equality and peaceful and democratic societies, as well as a particular focus under inclusive economic development, where it stresses a human rights- and life cycle-based approach:

*Social protection systems fulfil a key function for a more equitable and gender-equal distribution of welfare throughout people's lives.*

/.../

*Social protection is a human right in its own right but it is also a means of attaining other human rights, such as education and health.*

Policy framework for Sweden's development cooperation Government Communication 2016/17:60.

In further support of universal social protection, Sweden’s Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry for Social Affairs announced their joint Government initiative *Svensk välfärd på export* (“*Swedish welfare on export*”) in 2015.<sup>38</sup> The initiative commits Sweden to share experience and expertise around social protection systems and actively promote the issue of inclusive social protection systems in international arenas for development cooperation.

Additional to the policy framework for development cooperation, Sweden’s development aid is guided by

a number of country- and region strategies describing in more detail the focus of interventions in respective country and region. A number of these strategies include a specific result for provision of social protection\* but none of them specifically stresses that Sweden should support universal social security systems or the possibility to share Sweden’s experiences in this area. On the other hand, a majority of the strategies include support for social services such as health- and education systems, and many of them stress the importance of expansion and inclusivity of such services, which can be understood to point towards a universal approach.

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\* Current country strategies with a mandate to work with social protection: Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

## 8. Examples of Sida's work with social protection

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida, has during recent years expanded their support to development of social protection systems, guided by the mandates in the above mentioned government policies and guidelines..

### Africa

U Currently, Sida gives financial and technical support to the establishment of public, non-contributory social security systems, mostly in the forms of cash transfers, to eight partner countries, of which seven are in Sub Sahara Africa.\* In addition, Sida supports social protection multilaterally through the World Bank's Rapid Social Response Programme<sup>39</sup> and through a research initiative called the Transfer Project which conducts impact evaluations on social protection programmes in Africa.<sup>40</sup> The financial support during the last five years amounts to 1.5 billion SEK. There is consensus among the Swedish political parties that the support to develop social protection should continue.

The social protection programmes that Sida support vary in design, and although none of them can be categorized as entirely universal, some of them have potential for being scaled up to universal schemes. Several of the Sida-supported programmes are means-tested benefits targeted to the poorest and most vulnerable households (rather than individuals) in each community. Some of them also have conditionalities attached to the benefits, for example the Productive Social Safety Net (PSSN) in Tanzania. These programmes are often supported by the World Bank, which up until recently have embraced a poverty-targeted and conditional design of social protection.

### Latin America

In Latin America, significant investments in universal cash transfers and social insurance are being made, particularly in the area of universal pensions. These are found in for example Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Argentina and most recently in Mexico. In general, these countries

have taken own initiative to introduce these systems and also to fund them.

Sweden has rarely contributed to the funding of the development of specific social protection systems in Latin American countries. However, through Sweden's involvement in the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Sweden has actively supported policies and guidelines where universal social protection systems have been promoted as a goal. A central idea in this context has been that Sweden should share the Scandinavian experience of the universal welfare systems. Sweden has also given grants for the evaluation of universal cash transfers and social insurance schemes.<sup>41</sup>

### Asia

Sweden does not currently provide support to the development of social protection systems in Asian countries, with the exception of a newly initiated support to a cash transfer programme linked to public works in Afghanistan. However, Sweden is engaged in a number of large-scale projects aiming to achieve basic schooling for all and to give all people access to basic health and medical care. These education and medical care projects are being implemented in primarily three countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Burma.

### Coordination within the Swedish government and agencies

The Swedish government and Sida are taking steps to enhance Sweden's contribution to the development of social protection, in accordance with the above mentioned policies and initiatives in this area. The actions taken include coordination of a network of relevant government ministries and agencies, such as the Ministry for Social Affairs, the Swedish Pensions Agency and the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, along with civil society organisations, in order to collaborate and synchronize development interventions for social protection within the frame of Sweden's Policy for Global Development.

\* Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, DR Congo, Mali and Afghanistan.

## 9. International development actors’ work with social protection – and Sweden’s contribution

International development actors have been supporting the establishment of social protection systems to various degrees and with different approaches. The discourse on social protection was initially highly influenced by the World Bank, followed by other UN agencies, notably the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) while the attention of Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) to social protection have increased in recent years. Due to the cross-sectoral nature of social protection – cutting through development areas such as nutrition, health, education, good governance (which explain why social protection is highlighted in several of the Sustainable Development Goals) – and because social protection is still an evolving development issue, organisations and institutions have to a large extent employed their own definitions and emphases, which tend to reflect each actors’ specific mandate and interest. The World Bank for example focuses on social protection as a means of reducing poverty and promoting pro-poor economic growth, UNICEF frames social protection as a tool for achieving children’s rights and wellbeing, and the ILO aims to extend social security coverage to all. Another important multilateral actors is the European Union (EU). Among bilateral donor agencies, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) deserves special attention for its longstanding and strategic work with social protection, while other bilateral actors that have increased their support to social protection more recently include the governments of Australia, Germany, Ireland and Sweden.

### THE WORLD BANK

Social protection has been a focus for the World Bank through support of social safety nets which dates back to the 1980s. Social safety nets typically include labour-intensive public works programmes for the working poor and targeted transfers of cash or food to vulnerable groups who are unable to work, such as older people and persons living with chronic illness or disability. The World Bank was one of the first international develop-

ment actors to conceptualize social protection in a comprehensive manner.<sup>42</sup> It identifies the risks that people face (classified as natural, economic, social, political, etc.) and the appropriate policy instruments that could assist people to either reduce, manage, or cope with these risks. *The World Bank 2012–2022 Social Protection and Labor Strategy* emphasises three objectives for social protection: (1) *improve resilience against shocks*; (2) *improve equity by reducing poverty and promoting equality of opportunities*; and (3) *promote opportunity by building human capital, assets, and access to jobs*. The World Bank is a leading actor on social protection in global development, and its technical advice influences national social protection policies and system designs in numerous countries across Latin America, Africa and Asia.

### Sweden’s contribution

Sweden has contributed a total of SEK 70 million to the World Bank’s Rapid Social Response (RSR) programme.<sup>43</sup> Established in 2009, the purpose of RSR is to help the world’s poorest countries to build effective social protection systems. Apart from Sweden, the RSR is supported by the Russian Federation, Norway, the United Kingdom and Australia.

The RSR operates mainly through providing relatively small – compared to typical grants or loans (IDA/IBRD) from the Bank – but catalytic funding for social protection programme development all over the world, with one objective being to attract other resources and bilateral development partners. The RSR focuses on creating new targeting mechanisms, strengthening new payment modalities and management information systems (MISs), and coordinating ministries, agencies, and subnational governments.

During 2016, Sweden has taken a somewhat more prominent role in the World Bank’s work with social protection, by actively taking part in the Ministerial Roundtable meeting during the World Bank/IMF spring meetings which convenes high-level representatives

(typically ministers of economy and finance, development agency officials, and senior government representatives) for a dialogue on social safety nets.

### A shift in the agenda?

The World Bank regards social protection as a poverty reduction tool rather than as a human right, and therefore it links social protection to labour markets and pro-poor employment, rather than to fulfilment of social and economic rights. As a consequence of this view, the World Bank favours certain social protection instruments (e.g. conditional and targeted cash transfers) and has in general rejected the idea of universally designed social protection programmes in low- and middle income countries. However, with the initiating of Agenda 2030 and its underlying principle of “Leave No One Behind”, there have been signals from the World Bank of a shift in its social protection agenda towards a more universal approach (read further under the ILO section). It remains to be seen if and how this new agenda of universality will be implemented at country level, where the World Bank is already involved in designing many targeted and conditional social protection programmes.

### ILO

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has been a longstanding advocate for the expansion of social protection, often working through international conventions and recommendations as a legal foundation. *The Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention (No. 102)* in 1952<sup>44</sup> is the only international instrument that establishes worldwide-agreed minimum standards for comprehensive social security.\* The ILO has since been involved in efforts to extend social security coverage beyond formally employed workers to informal workers, and to encourage governments and employers to apply *Decent work* standards that include access to employment-related social protection, and recently by leading the adoption and implementation of *Recommendation No. 202 on National Social Protection Floors* by the International Labour Conference in 2012. A social protection floor includes four ‘guarantees’: universal access to health care, and income security for children, working age adults and older persons. The Social Protection Floors recommendation have been instrumental in gaining legal and political support for universal social

protection from national governments and other international actors. The ILO has a unique structure as a tripartite agency with government, employer, and worker representatives, which motivates its mandated focus on contributory social security schemes such as provident funds. However, the ILO pursues a rights-based advocacy approach where social protection is seen as an issue of human rights and social justice, resulting in the promotion of universally designed social protection systems.

The **Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202)** provides guidance to member States in building comprehensive social security systems and extending social security coverage by prioritizing the establishment of national floors of social protection accessible to all in need.

*Social protection floors are nationally defined sets of basic social security 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 effective access to goods and services defined as necessary at the national level.*

National social protection floors should comprise at least the following four social security guarantees, as defined at the national level:

1. access to essential health care, including maternity care;
2. basic income security for children, providing access to nutrition, education, care and any other necessary goods and services;
3. basic income security for persons in active age who are unable to earn sufficient income, in particular in cases of sickness, unemployment, maternity and disability;
4. basic income security for older persons.

Such guarantees should be provided to all residents and all children, as defined in national laws and regulations, and subject to existing international obligations.

The Recommendation lists a number of principles that ought to be applied when designing national social protection floors including that:

The level of income security should be “at least at a nationally specified minimum level”. The social protection floor must be guaranteed to apply to all residents and all children, that is, even children who are not resident in the country should be included.

The social protection floor is today a common reference for what countries ought to be implementing in this area, which is clear in the proposal for new global development goals among other things.

The Swedish government have concluded that the Recommendation 202 does not require any further measures to fulfil concerning the Swedish welfare system.

\* Including: medical care, sickness benefit, unemployment benefit, old-age benefit, employment injury benefit, family benefit, maternity benefit, invalidity benefit and survivor's benefits.

Source: ILO.org and written communication from Swedish Government 2013/14:52. ILO Recommendation 202 concerning National Floors of Social Protection

### ILO and World Bank collaboration

Throughout recent years, the ILO and the World Bank has sought out a closer collaboration in the area of social protection, which in 2016 led them to launch a Global Partnership for universal Social Protection to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>45</sup> The concept note for the Partnership states the following:

*“For the World Bank and the ILO, universal social protection refers to the integrated set of policies designed to ensure income security and support to all people across the life cycle – paying particular attention to the poor and the vulnerable. Anyone who needs social protection should be able to access it.”*

### SPIAC-B

The Inter-Agency Social Protection Coordination Board (SPIAC-B)<sup>46</sup> is an umbrella network established in 2012 for coordinating the work of international organizations, governments and key civil society organisations in the social protection field. It gathers some 50 partner organisations engaged in social protection cooperation in low- and middle income countries. The initiative was made by the G20 Development Group, and builds on the Joint UN Social Protection Floors Initiative. The ILO and the World Bank are the co-chairs of SPIAC-B. The purpose of SPIAC-B is to coordinate and harmonise the activities of the organisations that provide social protection related technical and financial assistance to developing countries. SPIAC-B focuses on four key areas within social protection development: promotion, policy coherence, coordination and knowledge sharing. The EU is an active member of the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B), and bilateral actors such as Sweden also take part in the Board activities.

### UNICEF

UNICEF works with social protection motivated by their focus on children living in vulnerability and their mandate to promote the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC). In its *Social Protection Strategic Framework* from 2012,<sup>47</sup> UNICEF advocates for child-sensi-

tive social protection and argues for the expansion of inclusive, integrated social protection systems as an effective approach for achieving greater equity for children and contributing to broader human and economic development. In practice, UNICEF often advocates for unconditional child grants to meet children's needs for food and nutrition security, education and other basic social services, and to eradicate child labour – either as an independent social transfer scheme or as one component of a holistic social protection system. UNICEF promotes a rights-based approach to social protection, in order to ensure universal access to education, maternal and child health and other social services. UNICEF also supports capacity building of national government staff and has invested in strengthening the capacity of its own global, regional and national staff in social protection. With a widespread field presence worldwide, UNICEF is currently supporting social protection in over 100 countries. Sweden is currently funding social protection programmes where UNICEF is the lead agency in Kenya, Mali, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

### FAO

With a focus on strengthening linkages between social protection, food security and nutrition, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has recently become a vocal proponent for social protection. FAO primarily work in rural settings with people living in poverty and vulnerability, with their livelihoods earned from small-scale farming, livestock, fishing or other natural resources. Long-term interventions that have been core to FAO, such as food subsidies, strategic grain reserve management, crop insurance, and food price stabilisation measures, can also be classified as part of a wider social protection concept. FAO launched its *Social Protection Framework*<sup>48</sup> earlier this year (2017), which states FAO's vision on social protection: *People and communities living in rural areas as well as those whose livelihoods depend on natural resources are supported by social protection systems that help to: ensure their food security and improved nutrition, protect them before, during and after shocks and stresses, promote resilient livelihoods and sustainable management of eco-systems, and stimulate pro-poor growth and inclusive rural development.* Similar to UNICEF, FAO promotes a rights-based systems approach to social protection, guided by

three cross-cutting principles: social inclusion, gender equality and sustainability. Furthermore, FAO emphasises national ownership of social protection systems as well as integration with broader livelihood promotion and rural development strategies.

FAO's main strategy for their work with social protection is to make the economic case for expanding and scaling up social protection systems. They therefore focus their research on the economic (local) effects of cash transfer schemes. FAO provides policy and advocacy support to improve coherence between social protection and food security, agriculture and rural development, effective operational design of social protection programmes, institutional capacity-building at local, national and international level.

### WFP

Although primarily known as a humanitarian relief agency, rather than longer-term sustainable developmental and social protection programming, the World Food Programme (WFP) has implemented public works and school feeding programmes – parts of a comprehensive social protection approach – for decades. Through its Protracted Relief and Recovery Operations (PRRO) and in various 'linking relief and development' initiatives WFP contributes to development of the global social protection agenda. Like FAO, WFP has a mandate to focus on food security and nutrition, though usually through measures that address temporary rather than structural food deficits. In recent years WFP has shifted from delivering food aid towards delivering 'food assistance' – which includes vouchers and cash transfers – in emergency as well as non-emergency contexts. Coming from a humanitarian mission, WFP employs a targeted rather than universal approach to social protection, promoting safety nets *“meant to provide the most vulnerable with predictable support in the form of food, goods, cash or vouchers.”*<sup>49</sup>

WFP provide expertise in designing and delivering safety nets that reduce hunger and malnutrition, such as school meals programmes or insurance schemes that protect against crop failure.

### EU

The European Union (EU) endorses social protection as a tool to achieve inclusive development by increasing access to public services, strengthening resilience, sta-

bilising income, reducing inequality, promoting social inclusion and cohesion and providing inter-generational equity. In *Social Protection in European Union Development Cooperation – COM(2012)*<sup>50</sup> the European Commission presents its position:

*“The goal of EU development cooperation in supporting social protection is to improve equity and efficiency in provision, while supporting social inclusion and cohesion, as the essential underpinnings of inclusive, sustainable growth and poverty reduction. These goals spring naturally from the fundamental values of the European Union.”*

The Commission further states that *“Policy dialogues with partner governments should ensure that social protection systems are underpinned by principles that aim to achieve equal and universal access to social protection throughout people's lives, with particular attention to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people, such as children and persons with disabilities.”* The support is mainly technical and capacity-building, focusing on knowledge exchange between social protection expertise and institutions in EU member states and partner countries in South Asia, Central Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. Two leading initiatives have been SOCIEUX+ and the EU Social Protection Systems Programme (EU-SPS), an EU Action co-financed by the European Commission, the OECD and the Government of Finland.<sup>51</sup>

### DFID

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) has been highly influential in the international social protection debate since the early 2000s, advocating for cash transfers to replace food aid. DFID has also financed the implementation of cash transfer pilot projects in a number of partner countries, focusing on South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Today, they give financial and technical support to both smaller pilots and large-scale social protection programmes such as the Chars Livelihood Programme (CLP) in Bangladesh, the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in Ethiopia, the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme in Ghana, and the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) in Kenya. DFID has also pioneered innovative cash transfer payment modalities, such as using mobile phones and smartcards. DFID believes in building the evidence base for social protection

and in demonstrating that social protection is a good investment for all societies. DFID often support poverty targeted social protection programmes in rural areas, typically with a public works component, with the aim

to ‘graduate’ working people out of extreme poverty. In later years DFID has supported and strategically advocated for universal social protection schemes, for example the Senior Citizens Grant in Uganda.<sup>52</sup>

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