

Poverty Reduction and Policy Regimes

Thematic Paper

Social Protection and Poverty

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Social Policy and Development
Programme Paper Number 42
January 2010

United Nations
Research Institute
for Social Development



This United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) Programme Paper has been produced with the support of UNRISD core funds, which, in 2007–2009, were generously provided by the governments of Denmark, Finland, Mexico, Norway, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AIDS	acquired immune deficiency syndrome
DFID	UK Department for International Development
GDP	gross domestic product
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (<i>German Society for Technical Cooperation</i>)
HDI	Human Development Index
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NGO	non-governmental organization
NREGS	National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SSW	social security and welfare
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USWSS	Unorganised Sector Workers Social Security Scheme

Acknowledgements

Some sections of the report draw on work done jointly with David Hulme, *Social Protection or the Poorest. Concepts, Policies and Politics* (Palgrave Macmillan 2008). The author gratefully acknowledges detailed comments and suggestions on an earlier version of the report from Katja Hujo, other colleagues from the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) and two anonymous reviewers, which greatly improved it. The remaining errors are all mine.

Summary/Résumé/Resumen

Summary

In the last decade, social protection has emerged as a policy framework employed to address poverty and vulnerability in developing countries. This report has two main aims: to provide an overview of social protection, and to provide an assessment of its potential contribution to addressing poverty and vulnerability in developing countries.

Section 1 provides some preliminary definitions and tracks the emergence of social protection as a policy framework against a context of poverty and vulnerability trends in the 1980s and 1990s. Rising poverty and vulnerability following the 1980s in Latin America—known as the “lost decade”—the financial crises in 1997 in Asia and the rapid economic transformation in transition economies demonstrated the need to establish strong and stable institutions directly concerned with reducing and preventing poverty and vulnerability. Social protection provides a policy map, linking policy interventions to an understanding of poverty and vulnerability as multidimensional and persistent.

Section 2 reviews poverty and vulnerability concepts and measures. It pays particular attention to the growing influence of multidimensionality in poverty analysis. Duration and dynamics are important dimensions of poverty and contribute to an understanding of vulnerability, which is the likelihood that individuals or households would be in poverty in the future. Research into multidimensional aspects of poverty and vulnerability has made a very important contribution to the development and formulation of social protection.

Section 3 examines different approaches to social protection and traces them to underlying development perspectives. There are different versions of social protection, emphasizing either risk, rights or needs as the organizing concept. However, they all share common ground, an important feature of which is the broader developmental role of social protection in developing countries and its focus on (extreme) poverty reduction. This discussion opens a window on the conceptual and ethical bases of social protection.

Section 4 examines trends and key issues in the development of social protection programmes and policies in developing countries. The focus of this section is on social assistance, as the component of social protection which addresses poverty most directly, but reference is made where relevant to the other components of social protection, social insurance and labour market regulation. The extension of social protection in developing countries has focused on social assistance, as opposed to social insurance or labour market regulation. The section then traces the main features of regional pathways in the development of social protection and assistance, contextualizing the analysis of the resulting social protection programmes.

In the last decade and a half, there has been a great deal of innovation in social assistance

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