

# **Social protection in sub-Saharan Africa Will the green shoots blossom?**

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# The rise of social protection in sub-Saharan Africa

- Global rise of social protection programmes and perhaps ‘systems’ in developing countries (Mexico’s *Oportunidades*, Brazil’s *Bolsa Familia*, India’s *Employment Guarantee Scheme*, China’s *Minimum Living Subsidy Scheme* and many more)
- Social protection is a component of second-generation PRSS in Africa. There are now National Social Protection Strategies in Ghana, Mozambique, Rwanda and Uganda
- Livingstone Process – African Union, ministerial level
- Social protection as a response to food, fuel and financial crises
- ‘Green shoots’ of social protection – but can they take root in sub-Saharan Africa?

# Social protection: concepts and typologies

- What is Social Protection?
  - “public actions taken in response to levels of vulnerability, risks, and deprivation, which are deemed socially unacceptable within a given polity and society” (Conway, de Haan and Norton 2000).
- Why have Social Protection?
  - Risks (World Bank)
  - Basic Needs (MDG Consensus)
  - Human Development (UNDP)
  - Human Rights (ILO)
- What forms does Social Protection take?
  - Social Insurance (contributory health, unemployment, old-age systems)
  - Labour Market Regulation (minimum standards and worker rights)
  - **Social Assistance** (transfers to address vulnerability and poverty)
- The ‘green shoots’ in sub-Saharan Africa are mainly **social assistance** programmes

# **Social protection in sub-Saharan Africa: Origins**

- Indigenous social protection - community safety nets; locally specific; continue to evolve as informal social protection. Part of contemporary household strategy – dynamic informal/formal mixes
- Famine, food insecurity and crises – donor supported responses to crises. Usually social assistance, especially food aid
- Non-contributory pensions for poor whites in South Africa – initiated in 1928. Apartheid could not allow ‘white poverty’

# Green Shoots 1: Southern Africa Model

- Non-contributory pensions for poor old people were extended to South Africa's black population in 1994. Diffused to Namibia, Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana (means-tested income transfers, unconditional, regular)
- Tax-funded and driven by domestic political constituencies
- Child Support Grant introduced in South Africa in 1999
- Experiments with income transfer *plus* services programmes (conditional cash transfers) – Zibambele and Gundo Lashu in South Africa ... stalled?

# Green Shoots 2: Middle Africa Model

Two main types:

1. **Pure income transfers** (targeted, unconditional and regular) – Kenya's *CT-OVC*, Mozambique's *Food Subsidy Programme*, Zambia's *Pilot Cash Transfer Scheme* (Kalomo), Malawi's *Mchinji Social Cash Transfer Pilot Scheme*.
    - Funded by donors and donors heavily involved in design and management
  2. **Income transfers plus services** – cash for work. Several schemes in Ethiopia – especially *Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP)*. Also Malawi's *Improving Livelihood through Public Works Programme (MILPWP)*.
- Most of these Middle Africa schemes are only pilots – the one exception is Ethiopia's *PSNP*

# Ethiopia's PSNP

- PSNP is an income transfer *plus* services programme – (conditional cash transfer – cash for work)
- Covers more than 8.2 million people 11% of total population
- It provides income, income + food or food support through two components:
  - cash for public work (80% of budget)
  - ‘direct support’ for vulnerable households – often economically inactive (1.6 million people)
- Active in 4 out of 7 regions - most pastoral areas are still excluded but expected to be covered in future.
- PSNP is foreign aid financed but strongly embedded in the Ethiopian policy process.

# Social protection and African policy processes

- The **Southern Africa model** is driven by domestic political constituencies and is tax-funded. It seems reasonable to argue it is embedded and will evolve through domestic political processes.
- The **Middle Africa model** is largely financed by foreign aid and donors are central to programme design.
- **Question:** Are the Middle Africa initiatives driven by domestic demand or might they be just another donor fad?
  - Domestic demand? Livingstone process, AU and NSP Plans
  - Donor fad? Proliferation of pilot projects; example of Kenya's CT-OVC programme ('like a Christmas tree')
- Different processes? Ethiopia's PSNP and Africa-Brazil Alliance



# Social protection in sub-Saharan Africa: challenges

1. Are the new programmes socially & politically embedded?
2. Can they be afforded ...from domestic or aid resources?
  - Basic pension for poor – 1% GDP
  - Child support grants – 2% GDP
  - Primary health care – 2 to 3% GDP

- ILO estimates, costs can be kept lower by sequencing and targeting
3. Does sub-Saharan Africa have the institutional capacity?
  - The answer today is 'no' for large scale programmes in many countries
    - but that does not mean this cannot be built up (Elizabethan Poor Laws took 50 years!)
  - Diffusion and learning from SSA successes, government and civil society partnerships, PPPs. Start with building an epistemic community
    - Latin America and South Asia have them

# **Social protection in sub-Saharan Africa: initial conclusions**

- The green shoots are sprouting – Southern and Middle African varieties – perhaps a distinct Ethiopian variety
- Concerns about whether the challenges can be met – domestic political support, finance, and institutional capacity
- Possible ways of overcoming the challenges are emerging - Livingstone process, regional processes of diffusion and learning, aid and improved tax effort, and the gradual and hard work of institutional development
- Foreign aid and foreign ideas (and solidarity) can help but donors need to make sure they do not try to control social protection initiatives – only Africans can make social protection programmes (and systems) work in Africa