# HOW CAN SOCIAL PROTECTION BUILD RESILIENCE?

## INSIGHTS FROM ETHIOPIA, KENYA AND UGANDA

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Working paper

BRACED
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS


The authors would like to thank all participants in this research, including key informants in Kampala and Nairobi, as well as focus group participants in Turkana in the villages Kaitese, Kaloboi, Lokichar, Napeten and Kereio; and Apac in the villages Alido, Awany and Atek. A particular thank you goes to staff in the NDMA Turkana county office, in the ESP Apac county office and in WFP in Turkana, who provided valuable inputs and were of great assistance in facilitating the research on the ground.

We would also thank Cecilia Costella, Ric Goodman, John-Bosco Mubiru, Rebecca Holmes and Emily Wilkinson for their inputs into earlier drafts of this report, as well as Elvin Nyukuri and Moses Okech for research assistance provided during the fieldwork.

# Contents

# Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| 3As | Absorptive, Anticipatory and Adaptive Capacities |
| AIDS | Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome |
| ASALs | Arid and Semi-Arid Lands |
| BRACED | Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters |
| CDI | Community Development Initiatives |
| CT-OVC | Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children |
| DFID | Department for International Development |
| DRF | Disaster Risk Financing |
| EDE | Ending Drought Emergency |
| ESP | Expanding Social Protection |
| FGD | Focus Group Discussion |
| FSP | Food Security Programme |
| GFDRE | Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia |
| HABP | Household Asset Building Programme |
| HISP | Household Income Support Programme |
| HIV | Human Immunodeficiency Virus |
| HLPHCT | High Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers |
| HSNP | Hunger Safety Net Programme |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| IPCC | Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change |
| KII | Key Informant Interview |
| MGLSD | Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development |
| MLEAA | Ministry of Labour and East African Affairs |
| NCCP | National Climate Change Policy |
| NDEF | National Drought Emergency Fund |
| NDMA | National Drought Management Authority |
| NDPM | National Policy for Disaster Preparedness and Management |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| NSNP | National Safety Net Programme |
| NUSAF | Northern Uganda Social Action Fund |
| OCPT | Older Persons Cash Transfer |
| OPM | Office of the Prime Minister |
| RFM | Risk Financing Mechanism |
| SAGE | Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |

| | |
|---|---|
| SCG | Senior Citizen Grant |
| Sida | Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation |
| PPPT | Protective, Preventive, Promotive, Transformative |
| PRDP | Peace, Recovery and Development Plan |
| PSNP | Productive Safety Net Programme |
| PWSD-CT | Persons with Severe Disabilities Cash Transfer |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDP | UN Development Programme |
| UNICEF | UN Children's Fund |
| VFSG | Vulnerable Family Support Grant |
| VSLA | Village Savings and Loan Association |
| WFP | World Food Programme |

# Executive summary

In this paper we present a synthesis of findings from Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda on the role of social protection programmes in contributing to people's capacity to absorb, anticipate and adapt to climate-related shocks and stresses. Based on a combination of empirical research and desk-based studies the paper reflects on the actual and potential contributions social protection can make to increase the resilience of the poorest and most vulnerable. The analysis is informed by an understanding that resilience to climate extremes and disasters cannot be built by one programme or sector alone, but requires a range of programmes that together increase the capacity of people and governments to reduce the diverse set of risks that underpin poverty and vulnerability and increase the risk of disasters. For this, the comparative advantage of different sectors needs to be identified and strengthened to form part of a wider cross-sectoral sustainable development agenda.

In the case of social protection, findings from the three country case studies highlight that programmes currently make a strong contribution to the capacity of people to absorb the negative impacts of climate-related shocks and stresses on their livelihoods. They do so through the provision of well-implemented, regular cash transfers – regardless of whether these specifically aim to address climate shocks or lifecycle-based risks. This highlights that, to achieve resilience outcomes, there is a need for a stronger focus in programme design and evaluation on the quality of programme delivery. This finding also invites to broaden our understanding of resilience policy and programing that goes beyond efforts that specifically aim to address climate risks and incorporates more holistic understandings of vulnerability.

Social protection programmes that have been specifically designed to reduce vulnerability to climate-induced food insecurity, such as Kenya's Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) illustrate that integrating resilience objectives into the theory of change of programmes can increase the contributions social protection makes to the anticipatory capacity of national institutions and systems to better respond to climate-related disasters. However, to do so effectively, resilience objectives need to be translated into the design of programmes, and backed up with the necessary investments in the institutional capacity to deliver effectively on the objectives.

The case studies, as well as wider social protection literature, confirm that there is currently an evidence gap when it comes to social protection's contribution to long-term adaptation and sustainable livelihoods. While adaptation does not necessarily have to be an explicit objective of social protection programmes, contributions to adaptive capacity can potentially come from linkages with programmes that aim to build sustainable livelihoods – but this can be a challenge in contexts where solid complementary programmes are not in place. At a minimum social protection needs to consider the implications of climate risks in programme design to avoid unintended impacts in relation to maladaptation and to harness any potential positive impacts on adaptation.

Across programmes this paper finds that social protection's contributions to resilience are strongest where programmes' objectives match the design and implementation capacity to deliver programmes in a predictable and timely way. Expectations of what social protection can or cannot do to help people cope with climate shocks need to incorporate a realistic timescale in terms of building the capacity of programmes on the ground to deliver on objectives.

# Introduction

Social protection's profile on the development agenda is rising, and it features highly in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). International organisations such as the World Bank and the International Labour Organization (ILO) are now jointly promoting universal social protection floors for all those who need them. Debates in national and international policy circles are increasingly focused on how to put in place national social protection systems rather than temporary safety nets that step in as a substitute for humanitarian assistance.

Simultaneously, resilience has established itself as a dominant paradigm in international development, permeating different sectors and programmes – but is increasingly linked to an agenda to respond to climate change and disasters. Climate change is understood to be one of the biggest threats to humanity, with particularly detrimental impacts on poverty and inequality. The combination of shocks related to the climate, to global financial crises and to political instability threatens any advances made on poverty reduction (Bastagli, 2014; Hallegatte et al., 2016). A more integrated policy response, cognisant of the multiple risks people are exposed to and the responsibility to act, is now enshrined in the SDGs.

Taking these policy processes into account, it is not surprising that the rise of social protection is increasingly linked to the resilience agenda. From the disaster risk reduction side, the possibility of using social protection programmes to deliver humanitarian assistance faster and more efficiently is increasingly being explored (HLPHCT, 2015). Labels such as 'shock-responsive', 'climate-smart' and 'adaptive' social protection are now commonly used (e.g. Davies et al., 2009; Kuriakose et al., 2012; OPM, 2015), and in several countries in sub-Saharan Africa and

Asia, national governments and development partners are aiming to put in place social protection systems that from the start have the capacity to address short-term shocks as well as long-term stresses. The World Bank, for example, is leading on the Adaptive Social Protection Program in the Sahel; this is a multi-donor trust fund that aims to increase access to 'effective adaptive social protection systems' in six countries[1] (World Bank, 2016). A Department for International Development (DFID)-funded programme on shock-responsive social protection is carrying out research in five countries in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa,[2] as well as a regional study of the Sahel to strengthen the evidence on when and how social protection systems can be used to scale up assistance in response to shocks, particularly in low-income countries and fragile and conflict-affected states (OPM, 2015).

As part of the Knowledge Management component of the Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters (BRACED) programme, this research aims to take a step back and look at how large-scale national social protection programmes are already contributing to people's and national systems' capacity to absorb, anticipate and adapt to climate-related shocks and stresses. In particular, we want to identify the specific role social protection is playing in a wider, multi-sector resilience agenda to support resilience policy and programming that aims to reduce poverty and vulnerability in the long term and move towards sustainable development.

With this in mind, we conducted primary research on different social protection programmes in Uganda and Kenya, as well

1 Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal.

2 In-depth studies in Mali, Mozambique and Pakistan, and two lighter case studies, in the Philippines and Lesotho.

as carried out a desk-based study on Ethiopia. This report synthesises the findings from the research, and is complemented by individual country briefs (to be published February 2017). It is structured as follows: the next section sets out the analytical framework and methodology for the research, which is framed around BRACED's 3A resilience capacities: absorptive capacity, anticipatory capacity and adaptive capacity (Bahadur et al. 2015). Sections 2 and 3 summarise and analyse the specific findings from the three country case studies for each of the 3As. The final section draws out some key policy issues that emerged from the research and aims to inform bigger policy questions around social protection and resilience, which are translated into policy implications in the conclusion.

# Our approach and methodology

## Approach

DFID (2014) defines resilience as the 'ability to anticipate, avoid, plan for, cope with, recover from and adapt to (climate related) shocks and stresses'. Within BRACED, the concept is broken down into three capacities (Bahadur et al., 2015):

1. **Absorptive capacity** allows people or systems to absorb and cope with climate-related shocks and stresses during and after they occur. It enables people to reduce the immediate negative impact on livelihoods and basic needs. Types of programmes that can contribute to building absorptive capacity are regular cash transfers, collective loans or savings schemes and weather-indexed insurance that assist households in meeting their consumption needs in the immediate aftermath of a hazard.

2. **Anticipatory capacity** enables people and systems to be better prepared for the eventuality of a specific shock through proactive action by avoiding or reducing exposure or by minimising vulnerability to it. In practice, anticipatory capacity can be demonstrated in the ability of communities to manage disaster risks by planning in advance, for example through disaster response plans, training exercises and natural resource management.

3. **Adaptive capacity** is understood to be the ability to adapt to multiple and long-term climate risks, as well as to learn and adjust after a disaster to reduce vulnerability to similar shocks in the future. The impact of adaptive capacity at the community or household level can be seen to be income stability and asset accumulation and retention over time

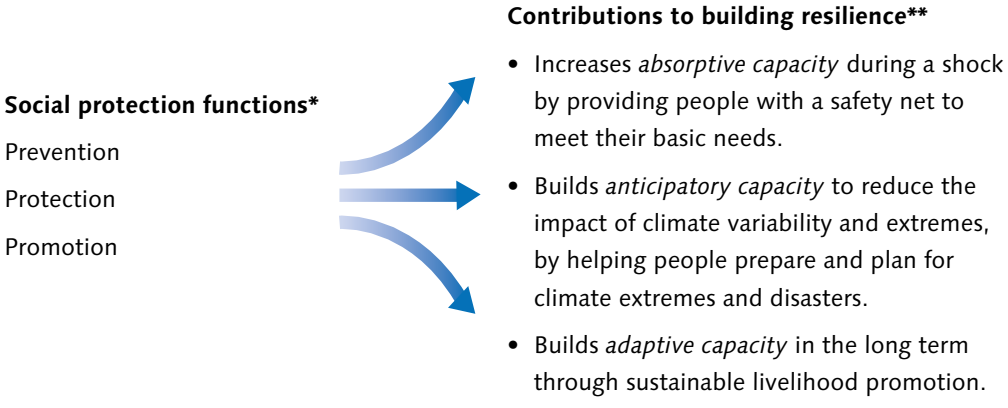
despite being exposed to shocks. Adaptive capacity also encompasses the ability of people to adapt and diversify their livelihoods in response to long-term climate changes, and to take deliberate and planned decisions based on available and accessible climate information.

Our understanding of social protection's contribution to resilience building draws from the 3As and links them with the core protective, preventive and promotive functions of social protection (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004).[3]

Social protection contributes to the 3As resilience capacities through its primary functions of protecting basic needs during times of hardship, preventing people from falling further into poverty after a shock and promoting livelihoods to improve their living standards in the long term. While the PPP(T) framework might not match directly with the 3As, it captures similar routes by means of which social protection could allow people to build the capacity to absorb, adapt to and anticipate shocks and stresses in their lives and livelihoods (see Figure 1).

3 The fourth function in Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler's framework, the transformative function of social protection, which applies to addressing issues around social equity and social exclusion, is not addressed here, since it would expand the scope of analysis to a range of wider interventions, such as minimum wage legislation and anti-discrimination laws.

**Figure 1: Social protection's contributions to resilience**




Source: Based on *Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004) and **Bahadur et al. (2015).

The role of social protection in contributing to absorbing specifically climate-related shocks is widely recognised in theory, with implications for more adaptive and 'climate-smart' programming (Davies et al., 2009; Béné et al., 2012; Kuriakose et al., 2012). Research on social protection and resilience has focused in great part on how to make programmes and systems more flexible and shock-responsive so they can provide a timely response to crises and reduce the negative impacts of shocks and disasters (e.g. Kuriakose et al., 2012; Vincent and Cull, 2012; OPM, 2015).

While these are without doubt crucial contributions to thinking about how to design social protection systems and programmes in a way that more effectively reduces vulnerability to a range of risks, we want to assess what can be learnt from existing social protection programmes in terms of their contributions to the resilience capacities of their beneficiaries. We do so to increase our understanding of the role social protection is currently playing in building people's 3As in relation to climate-induced shocks and stresses, and how it is doing so.

Only a few studies have looked at the protective (or absorptive) functions of social protection programmes specifically when faced with climate-related shocks and stresses. Evidence from programmes like Kenya's Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) and Mexico's conditional cash transfer, for example, indicates that participation in cash transfers allows people to meet their basic needs, even in times of drought. Beneficiaries can thus abstain from negative coping strategies, such as taking their children out of school or selling their assets to generate immediate cash flows (de Janvry et al., 2004; Merttens et al., 2013). However, there are also cases where it is suggested that the support provided through long-term cash transfers has remained insufficient to buffer beneficiaries from extreme climate shocks. Some social protection programmes, like old age pensions and child grants, are currently underrepresented in the literature on social protection and vulnerability to climate change. Their contributions to helping recipients cope with climate shocks and stresses are mainly hypothetical (Béné et al., 2013).

In relation to adaptive or anticipatory capacities, there are examples of social protection helping people adapt to and anticipate lifecycle-related risks, such as old age, motherhood and infancy, for example by taking out pensions or using cash transfers for child-related expenditures. Yet there is very little evidence on anticipation and adaptation to climate-related shocks from social protection programmes. In some cases, we even have indications of potential negative impacts of social protection programmes on adaptive capacity.

For social protection to build adaptive capacity, it needs to reduce current vulnerability without exacerbating future vulnerability. While social protection tools such as cash transfers have been effective in preventing disaster-induced poverty spirals, their ability to build livelihoods and resilience in advance

of longer-term climate changes is poorly understood (Johnson et al., 2013). Climate risks are rarely incorporated into the design of programmes that aim to reduce social and economic risks, despite the latter targeting populations highly dependent on the environment. Mexico's Oportunidades (renamed to Prospera) conditional cash transfer programme, for example, aims to build the human capital of the next generation, which has led to neglect of the indigenous agricultural practices that have traditionally been coping strategies for the rural population. At the same time, the rural population in marginalised areas face barriers to accessing labour markets, despite having obtained higher levels of education. By not taking account of climate-related causes of vulnerability in its theory of change and design, the programme risks narrowing down people's livelihood options and reducing their capacity to adapt (Solorzano, 2016). This limited scope for adaptation is linked to wider structural factors underpinning inequality, yet the programme design does not actively tackle it, which could undermine its long-term impact.

**In relation to adaptive or anticipatory capacities, there are examples of social protection helping people adapt to and anticipate lifecycle-related risks, such as old age, motherhood and infancy, for example by taking out pensions or using cash transfers for child-related expenditures.**

Another example of risks emerging from not incorporating a climate lens in programme design relates to seed transfers. These form part of interventions to increase food security, but can undercut local seed markets and undermine crop diversity

if seeds are not selected carefully (Devereux et al., 2006). This can have adverse negative consequences on the resilience of local ecosystems and increase vulnerability to climate change in the long term, which is why it can be considered a form of maladaptation (IPCC, 2014).

For this model to succeed, public works programmes need to ensure a coherent theory of change and identify where community assets address key challenges to livelihoods to have longer-term impacts, rather than being just temporary safety nets.

Other studies are forward looking by assessing the potential of social protection programmes to better align with climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. Steinbach et al. (2016) look at how the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act – a public works programme in India – could integrate climate change adaptation objectives into its design and implementation to 'climate-proof' its safety net function and build climate resilient assets. For this model to succeed, public works programmes need to ensure a coherent theory of change and identify where community assets address key challenges to livelihoods to have longer-term impacts, rather than being just temporary safety nets (McCord et al., 2013).

When it comes to strengthening the anticipatory capacity of social protection programmes, policy-makers and academics are increasingly interested in aligning humanitarian disaster response with existing social protection programmes to deliver assistance through mechanisms put in place in advance of a shock. In two

of the country case studies presented in this paper, Ethiopia and Kenya, the risk-financing mechanisms of the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) and the HSNP, respectively, are frequently cited as successful examples of flexible and scalable cash transfer programmes that can provide an emergency response in times of need. Yet whether these mechanisms can work in different countries depends on a set of preconditions (including context, caseload and institutional capacity) which are discussed further below. Linking emergency assistance to social protection is also unlikely to follow a blueprint solution in each context. Social protection systems and programmes differ in their levels of maturity, and in certain contexts aligning humanitarian assistance with social protection will not be advisable, particularly in conflict-affected regions, given political tensions and institutional capacity issues (OPM, 2015; Slater et al., 2015).

In this research, something that has become apparent when using the 3As conceptual framework in the context of social protection is that the same programme, or even specific components of programmes, can contribute to different capacities depending on the specific moment in time in the process of designing and implementing them. For example, putting in place funds and targeting systems for emergency situations in advance to allow social protection programmes to scale up is inherently anticipatory since it 'enables people and systems to be better prepared for the eventuality of a specific shock through proactive action by avoiding or reducing exposure or by minimising vulnerability to it' (see definition above). This anticipatory capacity can then enable the programme to meet its absorptive (or protective and preventive) function more adequately in times of crisis. Delivering assistance through emergency scale-ups provides recipients with the ability to absorb shocks. This is not to say that absorptive capacity necessarily has to be preceded

by anticipatory capacity. Regular cash transfers, for example, are delivered without necessarily anticipating a specific shock over a longer period of time. Despite not being anticipatory explicitly, they still provide people with the capacity to absorb shocks when they happen.

The example of scalable and shock-responsive social protection programmes also highlights how the 3As can play out at different levels: the anticipatory capacity of the programme in this case increases the absorptive capacity of households during a shock. It does not, however, increase the anticipatory capacity of households, since they are not necessarily aware that they will receive assistance. Hence, one-off emergency assistance does not provide them with the capacity to be better prepared for shocks; it simply allows them to absorb shocks better if an adequate amount (relative to their needs) is received on time.

The same applies to behaviour or actions at the individual/household level, which can lead to different 3A outcomes in different moments in time. For example when households save part of the transfer money, the action of saving can be understood as anticipatory since they save specifically for an emergency. During an idiosyncratic or covariate shock, households draw on their savings to absorb the shock. If they manage to save a large amount of money, they may invest in income-generating activities that can increase their capacity to adapt in the long term.

The same action (=saving) or interventions (=cash) can thus strengthen the 3As in different ways, at different levels (see more in Section 3 on inherent and auxiliary outcomes). For the purpose of this analysis, the next section separates out findings according to the 3As, but the line between them is often blurry. Specific design and implementation characteristics determine

whether the same intervention contributes to only one or several resilience capacities.

## Methodology

Based on the existing evidence, we think social protection's contribution to the 3As needs further unpacking so we can understand when and how social protection can contribute to people's resilience and when it might undermine it.

- Does participation in a programme increase people's capacity to *absorb* the negative impacts of climate shocks without suffering setbacks in their well-being?
- Does participation in the programme allow beneficiaries to take any measures to prepare for and *anticipate* the eventuality of a shock?
- Does current or past participation in a programme increase people's capacity to *adapt* their livelihoods to reduce their vulnerability to future climate risks?

In this research, we aim to answer these questions by looking at government-run social protection programmes in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda that have been in place for several years. The programmes fall broadly into two categories: those that aim specifically to address climate-related shocks and those that address lifecycle-based risks. While the overarching objectives of the programmes differ, they share strong similarities in the type of support they provide, which are either cash or asset transfers.

**Table 1: Overview of programmes**

| PROGRAMME | DESCRIPTION |
|---|---|
| **Kenya** | |
| Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (CT-OVC) | The CT-OVC was launched in 2004 as one of the first government-run and financed cash transfers in Kenya, with support from development partners including UNICEF, Sida, DFID and the World Bank. It was a direct response to the growing AIDS pandemic that was eroding informal family and communal coping mechanisms.<br><br>The CT-OVC is an unconditional cash transfer to poor households caring for orphans and vulnerable children with the aim of improving welfare and reducing poverty. It operates in all 47 counties and benefits 255,643 households, of which the government finances 215,470 (MLEAA, 2016). |
| Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) | The HSNP was launched in 2007 and is an unconditional cash transfer that aims to reduce poverty in counties in northern Kenya. The National Drought Management Authority (NDMA) implements the programme under the Ministry of Devolution and Planning. In its second phase (2013–17), the HSNP is to a large extent still funded by development partners, with the aim of increasing the share of government funding to cover over 50% of the transfer costs by 2017.<br><br>The HSNP currently is reaching out to 84,340 households in four counties (Turkana, Marsabit, Mandera and Wajir) with the objective of expanding coverage to an additional 100,000 households (MLEAA, 2016). |
| **Uganda** | |
| Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE) | SAGE forms part of the government's Expanding Social Protection (ESP) programme, and has piloted two cash transfer programmes:<br>• Vulnerable Family Support Grant (VFSG)<br>• Senior Citizen Grant (SCG)<br>The pilots are implemented through the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) with funds and technical support from DFID, Irish Aid and UNICEF.<br><br>Both SAGE pilots together aimed to reach 560,000 people in 124,547 households over the period of four years (2011–15), covering approximately 15% of households in 14 districts. |
| Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) | NUSAF is the largest public works programme in Uganda, with approximately 77,000 beneficiaries in 2013 (McCord et al., 2013). It consists of a combination of public works, household asset transfer programmes and community infrastructure. NUSAF 3 aims to increase the provision of seasonal productive safety nets and link it to disaster risk financing to allow scalability following a shock.<br><br>The programme operates through two different implementation modalities in Karamoja (WFP) and the remaining northern counties (OPM) with support from development partners. |

| Ethiopia | |
|---|---|
| Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) | The PSNP is part of the government of Ethiopia's Food Security Programme (FSP) and provides seasonal public works programmes for poor, chronically food-insecure able-bodied households. The PSNP has been in place since 2005. As part of the integrated Risk Financing Mechanism (RFM) the PSNP delivers additional assistance to food-insecure people affected by unpredicted shocks. In its fourth phase the PSNP currently supports close to 8 million people. |

The research consisted of a desk-based review of the three country case studies, as well as fieldwork at national, district and village level in Uganda and Kenya. The subnational research was undertaken in Turkana (Kenya) and Apac (Uganda).

The desk-based review covered social protection policies and programme documents in each country, as well as evaluations for the selected social protection programmes. This allowed us to identify the underlying theory of change of the individual programmes and how/whether the programmes form part of the national strategies to respond to climate shocks and disasters. Existing evaluation data were then reviewed to assess the programme impact on the 3As.

In Kenya and Uganda, we conducted key informant interviews (KIIs) at the national and subnational level with key actors in policy design and implementation of social protection programmes (including government ministries, development partners and civil society organisations), to understand their perspectives on the role social protection is currently playing in the national resilience agenda and how it contributes (in theory and practice) to building people's resilience capacities.

Additionally, we conducted research at the village level in selected districts and counties, to complement the evaluation data with qualitative data to enable us to understand how beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in the selected field sites

have dealt with climate-related shocks in the past, and whether participation in social protection programmes has allowed them to better absorb the shocks, anticipate future shocks or/and adapt their livelihoods in the long term to reduce vulnerability to climate risks.

In all sites, we held focus group discussions (FGDs) with a random sample of people in villages covered by social protection programmes. In each FGD we used participatory methods to first brainstorm events that had negatively affected participants in the past five years, which were then ranked in terms of importance based on participatory voting. The top three to five negative events were then the basis of a discussion around coping mechanisms, which included questions on whether participation in social protection programmes made a difference in responding to the negative events.

To account for gender differences and dynamics, we conducted separate FGDs with men and women, as well as mixed-group FGDs. In-depth interviews were also conducted with female and male beneficiaries to allow for a better understanding of the household-level impact of shocks and programme participation.

**Table 2: Overview of fieldwork**

| | KENYA | UGANDA | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|
| KIIs national level (government, NGO/research, development partners) | 11 | 12 | 23 |
| KIIs county/district level | 7 | 6 | 13 |
| In-depth interviews beneficiaries (half male/half female) | 10 | 11 | 21 |
| FGDs (half male/half female) | 6 | 8 | 14 |

## Limitations to the methodology

The amount of time dedicated to empirical data collection was limited to 9 days per country (four days in the national capital, one day in the district/county capital and four days in villages in Turkana/Apac). Given the very short amount of time per site, findings from this research cannot be considered representative, and they are not indicative of programme impact. The fieldwork rather assisted in asking context-specific questions to better understand the relevance of climate shocks for people in different localities as well as the perspectives of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries as to whether social protection programmes allowed them to respond. This was particularly useful to complement existing evaluation data for programmes not explicitly evaluating the impact of programme participation in terms of reducing vulnerability to climate shocks and stresses.

# 1. COUNTRY-SPECIFIC BACKGROUND ON SOCIAL PROTECTION

IMAGE:
MARTINA ULRICHS

## Kenya

In Kenya, social protection encompasses programmes that have emerged out of different policy agendas and are implemented by different agencies, which are now in a process of sector harmonisation and are coming together under the National Safety Net Programme (NSNP). The overall objective of social protection in Kenya's Vision 2030 medium-term economic development strategy is to invest in vulnerable groups to reduce poverty, which has remained persistently high at 45% since the 2000s.

The four flagship cash transfer programmes under the NSNP are:

- Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (CT-OVC)
- Older Persons Cash Transfer (OPCT)

- Persons with Severe Disabilities Cash Transfer (PWSD-CT)
- Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP)

Together, these cover approximately 500,000 households. Poverty is a cross-cutting selection criterion for beneficiaries of all cash transfers, but in the case of the first three an additional focus is on categorically vulnerable poor, whereas the HSNP targets vulnerable households in the four most drought-affected counties in the country's arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs). Despite these slight differences in target population and geographical focus, all programmes deliver cash transfers ranging from KSh 2,000 to KSh 2,700 (approximately $20 to $27 USD) (MLEAA, 2016).

In this research, we focused on the HSNP and the CT-OVC, as two large programmes that are nearly identical in that they both offer cash-only support yet differ in terms of the policy discourse they emerged from. In comparison with the CT-OVC, the HSNP forms an integral part of the national Ending Drought Emergency (EDE) framework, which is Kenya's response in a regional effort to reduce the risk of humanitarian crisis following the 2011 drought that affected the Horn of Africa. In comparison with the other cash transfer programmes in the NSNP, the HSNP is the only one with the capacity to deliver 'shock-responsive' emergency payments to an additional 172,000 households in response to pre-agreed drought thresholds. The HSNP's implementing agency, the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA), is also the key actor in coordinating resilience work at the national and county level across government and non-governmental actors under the EDE (Carabine et al., 2015). This gives it a prominent role in the resilience agenda compared with other cash transfers.

The CT-OVC, on the other hand, does not form part of the resilience narrative in Kenya; its origin as a programme that responded to the HIV/AIDS crisis explains this (Pearson and

Alviar, 2009), as does its institutional home in the Ministry of Labour, East African Affairs and Social Protection (MLEAA), now Ministry of East African Community (EAC) and Social Protection. This might also explain a clear distinction made by stakeholders interviewed between cash transfers that are contributing to resilience to climate shocks and those that are mainly addressing lifecycle-based vulnerabilities. The cash transfers managed by MLEAA are perceived as addressing economic risks, whereas the HSNP is perceived as a direct measure to reduce the risks posed by drought as part of the EDE's Pillar 5 'Drought Risk Management'. Yet 'routine' HSNP beneficiaries are chronically food-insecure households that receive regular transfers for several years. The HSNP currently acts only as a direct emergency response, with direct funding from DFID. However, a National Drought Emergency Fund (NDEF) is being created that will be used in part to finance flexible expansion and coverage.

## Uganda

Similar to Kenya, social protection in Uganda is divided into different sectors and institutions. The Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) originated in the government's Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) and is the largest public works programme in Uganda, with 77,000 beneficiaries in 2013 (McCord et al., 2013). It has undergone changes to its design in its different phases, with NUSAF 1 (2003–9) aiming to promote livelihoods through Community Development Initiatives (CDI) and NUSAF 2 then broadening the scope by adding a public works component with a focus on improving infrastructure and access to basic services, as well as more transparent and accountable programme management structures (ibid.).

NUSAF 2 and now 3 combine both public works and livelihoods support (these are options of support, rather than complementary activities for the same group of beneficiaries). In NUSAF 2, the public works focused on improving the provision of basic services; NUSAF 3 aims to link public works activities with disaster risk financing and scale up the provision of temporary employment in response to disasters. The livelihood support is provided through the Household Income Support Programme (HISP), which distributes productive assets to poor and vulnerable households (on a one-off basis). NUSAF currently operates through two different implementation modalities. In Karamoja it is implemented by the World Food Programme (WFP) and funded by DFID; in the remaining northern counties (the 'Greater North') it is implemented by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and funded through a World Bank loan with additional DFID grant funding. Unless specifically mentioned, NUSAF 2 here refers to that implemented by the government in the Greater North.

Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE), on the other hand, forms part of the government's Expanding Social Protection (ESP) programme, which was launched in 2010 with the objective of embedding a national social protection system as a core element of Uganda's planning and budgetary processes. The two SAGE cash transfer pilots, the Vulnerable Family Support Grant (VFSG) and the Senior Citizen Grant (SCG), aimed to support this process by providing evidence on the impact and feasibility of delivering regular direct income support to vulnerable households. Both SAGE pilots together aimed to reach 560,000 people in 124,547 households over a period of four years (2011–15), covering approximately 15% of households in 14 districts. The VFSG was phased out in 2015 since the SCG proved politically more popular and socially acceptable, owing to its targeting methodology. The SCG has since been scaled

up to at least 100 beneficiaries in 20 districts, and the objective is to expand coverage in a total of 55 districts until 2020.

In Uganda, resilience to climate shocks does not form a major part of the Social Protection Policy, although disasters are listed as one of the risks people face. The main focus of the policy is on reducing vulnerability to lifecycle risks. And unlike in Kenya, key resilience policy papers, including the National Policy for Disaster Preparedness and Management (NDPM) and the National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) 2015, mention neither of the social protection programmes. The Public Works Guidelines developed by multiple stakeholders (including ESP and OPM) were a first explicit effort to integrate climate risks in social protection programming. NUSAF 3's public works component will be the first attempt to specifically incorporate social protection interventions with climate change, with the specific objective of preventing a drop in household consumption following a disaster. Further, the public works component aims to support long-term adaptation through productive community assets for soil and water conservation, as well as increasing the anticipatory capacity of programmes through the Disaster Risk Financing (DRF) mechanism.

## Ethiopia

Ethiopia provides a useful case study to explore how social protection does and can contribute to resilience to climate-based shocks and stresses, for three reasons. First, despite impressive growth in the past decade or so, Ethiopia is experiencing high levels of poverty and vulnerability alongside substantial incidence of climate-related shocks and stresses. The lives and livelihoods of the vast majority of the poor are inextricably tied to the weather. Second, there is growing commitment by the

government to making strategic linkages between economic growth and climate change adaptation in policies and planning (e.g. GFDRE, 2011) and social protection has been identified as a key pillar in the climate change and disaster risk management strategies of both the government and its development partners. Third, unlike in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Ethiopia's main social protection programme has been running, at scale, for more than a decade. When compared with the situation in other countries in the region, where social protection is fledgling, covers only a small share of poor and vulnerable households or still remains in pilot phase, Ethiopia's social protection and resilience experience provides lessons about what is possible, under what conditions and over what timelines.

When compared with the situation in other countries in the region, where social protection is fledgling, (…) Ethiopia's social protection and resilience experience provides lessons about what is possible, under what conditions and over what timelines.

The Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) dominates social protection in Ethiopia. Established in 2005 with an initial caseload of 5.5 million beneficiaries, at its outset the PSNP reflected a serious attempt by the Ethiopian government and development partners to get off the emergency appeals 'merry-go-round' (Raisin, 2001, 2002; World Bank, 2012). The programme has a strong public works component, with around 80% of beneficiary households providing labour to support the creation or rehabilitation of community assets. Some of these assets are directly related to climate change mitigation and adaptation, for

example soil and water conservation activities to protect against runoff and soil loss and to allow reforestation of degraded areas. The remainder of beneficiaries receive cash or food transfers without providing labour in return. In addition to assets created through public works, it is recognised that wider, complementary programmes and activities are required for the PSNP to provide more than a safety net that protects during lean times. The Household Asset Building Programme (HABP) provides agricultural credit to PSNP households with the goal of allowing them to build their productive household asset portfolios and translate these assets into improved and more productive livelihoods.

Given its focus on providing a more predictable response to predictable hunger, the PSNP delivers transfers primarily during the seasons when households are most at risk of shortfalls in food consumption – notably those months immediately preceding harvests – and usually for a period of around six months. It has two main mechanisms through which it deals with contingencies, particularly those related to weather-based risk events. First, contingency funds, initially held at local, state and national level, comprise around 20% of the total budget. In practice, these have frequently been used to cover a permanent caseload of people facing chronic food shortages, rather than an emergency caseload to tackle transitory hunger. Second, a Risk Financing Mechanism (RFM) was established in 2011 to pre-position financial resources and create mechanisms to trigger a scale up of the PSNP in the case of a shock.

The next section presents evidence from programme evaluations and broader research regarding the extent to which the PSNP has demonstrated impacts on absorptive, anticipatory and adaptive capacities alongside evidence from Uganda and Kenya. But PSNP programme documentation (e.g. the Ethiopian government's Programme Implementation Manuals, World Bank Program

Appraisal Documents and DFID Business Plans and logframes) is also insightful. The three phases of the PSNP (2005–10, 2010–15 and 2015–20) demonstrate a steady increase in the perceived role of the PSNP in contributing to resilience-building. In the first phase the focus was on providing transfers in a timely way and enabling households to graduate out of food insecurity. Reflections on that first phase now point to the challenges of attempting to do too much too soon, and the importance of getting the transfer system working well. While Ethiopia had a very strong and longstanding track record on delivering food aid, the switch to cash brought new challenges that took some time to overcome. In the second phase, lessons from the early experiences saw the launch of both the HABP and the RFM – broadening the scope of the PSNP to contribute not only to absorptive capacity but also to anticipatory and adaptive capacity. In the third phase, the commitment to resilience-building and climate change adaptation is stronger still. Lessons from the Climate-Smart Initiative have been incorporated into the redesign. The PSNP is cited as a key pillar in disaster risk management, donors increasing articulate the rationale for and objective of the PSNP in the language of climate action and adaption and climate funding is increasingly used to resource the PSNP.

# 2. FINDINGS

IMAGE: EDWINA STEVENS / SMALL WORLD STORIES / ETHIOPIA DELIVERING AS ONE

## Contributions to absorptive capacity

When it comes to the 3As, social protection fares the strongest on absorptive capacity. This is not entirely surprising since the social protection programmes reviewed in this research were specifically put in place to assist people in buffering shocks. The PSNP and HSNP, for instance, are programmes that aim to put an end to recurring food crisis, particularly in drought-prone regions of Kenya and Uganda that have depended on emergency appeals and food aid for decades. Both programmes have demonstrated positive effects in smoothing the consumption levels of vulnerable households over the years and in some cases have managed to maintain these in the aftermath of an extreme drought.

The HSNP in its first phase (2009–12) achieved significant impacts on food security by increasing the number and size of meals of 87% of beneficiary households. Beneficiaries also spend more on food compared with control households, although this is driven by a fall in food consumption among control households rather than an improvement among transfer recipients. This highlights how the HSNP functions successfully as a safety net to protect households from the negative impacts on poverty of the 2011 drought that affected the Horn of Africa (Merttens et al., 2013).

Findings from the PSNP also indicate the protective or absorptive function of the seasonal employment scheme. Food security indicators improved modestly between 2011 and 2013 whereas levels of assets did not decline, even during the hungry season (Maxwell et al., 2013). The PSNP reduces vulnerability to a drought but also increases the ability of households to bounce back and recover faster. This was demonstrated by Knippenberg (2016), who looks at not only *ex-ante* but also *ex-post* elements of resilience by drawing on panel data of beneficiary and non-beneficiary households and estimating their recovery trajectories after a drought. The results 'suggest that the PSNP reduces vulnerability [to a drought] by 60% and doubles the level of resilience, significantly improving the post-treatment recovery trajectory… When a household experiencing drought receives the mean level of PSNP payments (498 birr, approximately $23 USD), their welfare drops less following a shock and recovers more rapidly' (ibid.).

Both the HSNP and PSNP aim specifically to reduce food insecurity caused by drought, but what about child grants or old age pensions that address lifecycle-related risks? Whereas the evaluations of the SAGE cash transfers and the CT-OVC highlight positive impacts in terms of food security and dietary diversity, little reference is made to whether these are maintained following a significant covariate shock – such as a drought.

In the case of Uganda, the fieldwork was conducted in Apac – a region that is not of particular priority to the government or development partners in terms of climate change initiatives but that has been identified as highly vulnerable, with the main hazards being internal conflicts, flooding, prolonged dry spells and animal vector diseases (UNDP, 2016). In Apac, beneficiaries and ex-beneficiaries of both SAGE pilots mentioned that the cash was mainly used to buy food, school and health expenditures, as well as to purchase small livestock. During the lean season, however, cash alone can help bridge the food gap and the transfer is spent predominantly on food. According to the mid-term evaluation, SAGE beneficiaries use the transfer for emergencies, particularly in health shocks or to purchase food when crops are destroyed as a result of climatic conditions (Merttens et al., 2015).

Similarly, in Kenya, the responses from the HSNP routine beneficiaries and those receiving the CT-OVC did not differ significantly when it came to how they use the cash and how it helps them cope with drought. In Turkana, where the majority of the population depends on purchasing key food staples, since only 14% of the county population engages in agro-pastoralism,[4] most of the food supplies are imported from outside the county. According to participants in this research, the cash from the HSNP and the CT-OVC is used to purchase food throughout the year, yet the proportion of the transfer spent on food increases particularly in the dry months. The impacts of both programmes are similar when it comes to real household consumption levels. In the CT-OVC these increase by Ksh 274 ($3.40) per adult equivalent per month on average, whereas in the HSNP

4 Turkana county data from the Ministry of Pastoral Economies and Fisheries, 2016.

the increase is KSh 247 ($2.40) – but, unlike with the HSNP, it is not possible to say from the existing evaluation data whether consumption levels are maintained in the CT-OVC during times of extreme drought (Ward et al., 2010; Merttens et al., 2013). However, the timeliness of payments continues to be a challenge in the CT-OVC: the vulnerability of recipients can increase if transfers are not received when predicted and thus fail to fulfil have their absorptive function.

## A key programme feature to allow social protection to contribute to absorptive capacity is the regularity of the transfer.

Other than using cash transfers received to buy food, participation in the different cash-based social protection programmes also allows beneficiaries to engage in new types of behaviours that increase their capacity to absorb shocks – or opt out of negative coping strategies, such as selling assets. For example, participation in the SAGE cash transfers increases beneficiaries' ability to borrow larger amounts of money in the case of an emergency (Merttens et al. 2015).

A key programme feature to allow social protection to contribute to absorptive capacity is the regularity of the transfer. Unlike other programmes, NUSAF 2 public works does not provide cash over several months or years but rather over a limited period of 22 days, to bridge the food gap. The short-term nature of the assistance, as well as unreliable payments and the timing of the public works activities, has meant limited impact in terms of addressing chronic food insecurity; it is more akin to ad hoc emergency relief than a long-term development project (McCord et al., 2013). If delivered on time, ad hoc, one-off

assistance can help people absorb a specific shock at a given moment, but it does not contribute to absorptive capacity beyond that specific event and does not address the underlying vulnerability that reduces people's capacity to absorb shocks by themselves. Stakeholders working on NUSAF in Karamoja raised similar concerns. According to one key informant, NUSAF 2 has not been addressing chronic vulnerability outside of the lean season, and during the lean season absorptive capacity is limited because of the amount of food transferred, which is only 50% of the recommended daily allowance. This raises questions around the minimum length of time necessary for seasonal safety nets to have a positive impact on seasonal food insecurity, let alone chronic food insecurity.

> *'Predictable cash transfers in communities is the safety net that is needed to build resilience. Currently the work in Karamoja is still very much about responding to cyclical food crises' (development partner, Uganda).*

In the case of NUSAF's HISP, the extent to which the absorptive capacity of the household is built depends on the type of the asset transferred. In Apac, those who received goats were more likely to sell them following a shock, since the livestock functions as a savings bank that generates cash in the case of an emergency. However, when it comes to more valuable livestock used for agricultural production, such as oxen, the contribution to absorptive capacity is low, since they are considered too valuable to be sold for quick cash generation. They can increase the agricultural productivity of households during good years but when the weather fails they have no income-generating potential. This finding highlights the importance of differentiating assets in terms of the contributions they make to livelihoods – and in this case the 3As – by taking into account their specific characteristics (Kim and Sumberg, 2015).

In sum, participation in social protection programmes can contribute to people's capacity to absorb shocks depending on the type of the intervention (cash/assets), its longevity and the quality of implementation. Theories of change differ, however, in terms of how they aim to contribute to absorptive capacity. The HSNP, SAGE and CT-OVC deliver cash for several years to households and are the means by which people can absorb shocks. They do not intend to become, or are not capable of becoming, the means by which participants' livelihoods will be promoted (or 'graduated') to a state of resilience that can be maintained without programme support. Expectations of programmes like the HSNP and SAGE are modest in this regard and stakeholders perceive them primarily as safety nets.

Other types of programmes are considered temporary support to lift people above a poverty threshold. These are either explicitly framed around the resilience agenda or speak to the 'graduation' approach in social protection. Cash-for-work programmes, for example, provide cash as short-term consumption support, but the long-lasting impacts on livelihoods and food security are expected to emerge from household and community assets. The evidence to sustain this theory of change is shaky, however (e.g. McCord, 2013), as the following sections discuss.

## Contributions to anticipatory capacity

When it comes to the capacity to anticipate specific shocks and reduce their impact through preparedness and planning, social protection can make contributions at two different levels: the individual/household level and the institutional/systems-level.[5]

5 The BRACED 3A resilience framework locates anticipatory capacity at the level of social systems but, since social protection targets individuals and households, we considered it important to include it in the analysis.

At the individual/household level, one of the few options people have to mitigate future risks is to save some money whenever possible. Savings and access to loans can be seen as increasing the anticipatory capacity of people, by taking action in advance of a shock so as to be better prepared. Conceptually, savings make a contribution to the absorptive and anticipative capacity of people to cope with shocks. Whereas the use of savings in the time of shock is absorptive, the act of setting money aside for the eventuality of a shock is anticipatory. Cash transfers can have a positive impact on people's ability to save, and, though they are not 'earmarked' for specific shocks, they provide an overall buffer for a range of risks or expenditures.

Neither of the programmes in Uganda or Kenya specifically encourages beneficiaries to accumulate savings or join village savings and loan associations (VSLAs) – although non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as CARE work with beneficiaries to these. This was not the case in the research sites, however, but most participants nevertheless said they would save money whenever possible, whether individually or through village savings groups, which resonates with evaluation findings. In SAGE, a statistically significant increase was observed in the proportion of beneficiary households having savings. In the case of VFSG (not SCG) households, SAGE had had positive impacts in this regard. Savings from these groups were spent on household needs and to respond to shocks, such as illness. Savings also take the form of assets, particularly livestock, which beneficiaries explicitly perceive as a strategy to mitigate risks and generate cash in times of need (Merttens et al., 2015). The HSNP evaluation also highlights the programme's significant impact on households' ability to save and access credit (Merttens et al., 2013).

In Ethiopia, on the other hand, the PSNP aims specifically to link beneficiaries to microfinance institutions and rural savings and

credit cooperatives through the HABP and has increased access to loans for beneficiaries (Berhane et al., 2013).

**Semi-nomadic pastoralist livelihoods have evolved out of a need to anticipate drought and reduce the risk of losing livestock by moving seasonally with herds in search of water and pasture.**

Savings are not the only action people take to reduce the risk of climate hazards. Traditional livelihoods and coping mechanisms, particularly in pastoralists areas, have been intrinsically shaped by the need to anticipate and respond to drought (Ali and Hobson, 2009). Semi-nomadic pastoralist livelihoods have evolved out of a need to anticipate drought and reduce the risk of losing livestock by moving seasonally with herds in search of water and pasture. Apart from protecting livestock, another endemic resilience strategy is to invest in informal networks, which become vital safety nets during times of drought. As one key informant in Turkana said eloquently:

> *'People here are professors in resilience. They invest in two things: in their livestock and in their friends. These are their sources of resilience' (local staff at international organisation, Turkana).*

Investing in social networks is similar to accumulating savings or livestock. It is an action taken in advance of a crisis, in anticipation of having to resort to these resources during times of hardship. The importance of investing in these social networks also explains the high levels of dilution of the transfers, since beneficiaries are expected to share the cash with their

friends and family. According to the HSNP 1 evaluation, 25% of beneficiaries reported sharing at least some of their transfers with others (Merttens et al., 2013). Similar patterns were observed among pastoral groups in Ethiopia receiving PSNP support (Sabates-Wheeler et al., 2013). One issue to further explore here is how formal safety nets can better interact with informal ones without necessarily eroding – and rather complementing – existing indigenous resilience strategies (Watson, 2016).

Despite these coping strategies, the anticipatory capacity of individuals and households is compromised if appropriate systems are not in place to mitigate risk and respond to shocks. In Apac, for example, anticipatory capacity at individual level was limited because of a lack of accessible and accurate weather information, as well as inefficient or absent systems at the local and district level to increase preparedness for a potential food crisis following harvest failure. When asked how they prepared for the eventuality of a drought, farmers said that each year they prepared for the rainfall by ploughing their fields in advance. The planting can only start after the first rain, however, and farmers have no means of knowing for when the rainfall is predicted. Key informants interviewed for this research agreed that the systemic anticipatory capacity was yet to be built at the district level and disaster response plans were under-developed and under-funded.

> *'You need to have a fire van and firefighters in place to respond to the fire in time' (development partner, Turkana).*

However, examples from Kenya and Ethiopia highlight how the anticipatory capacity of national disaster response systems can be strengthened by using existing cash transfer delivery and targeting mechanisms. The HSNP was designed as a permanent safety net for chronically vulnerable households, but from the start put in place procedures and contingency funds that would

allow it to become an effective response mechanism in case of emergency and built anticipatory capacity at the systems level. The registration process groups households into different categories, based on their levels of vulnerability determined by a combination of proxy means testing and community-based targeting. The most vulnerable groups are part of the routine households who receive regular cash transfer, whereas the second and third group receive monthly emergency payments for as long as severe or extreme drought prevail locally. Drought severity is determined through the Vegetation Condition Index, which triggers response once predefined thresholds for the three different levels of drought (moderate, severe and extreme) are passed.[6] This has allowed the HSNP to become an innovative disaster risk reduction tool that increases the preparedness and capacity of institutions at national level to respond, by putting in place an action plan (including objectively determined index-based triggers), targeting and delivery mechanisms in advance of an emergency. It reduces the risk of delayed relief operations, which tended to start after the crisis had already unfolded because of the chain of lengthy bureaucratic processes in declaring emergencies and deciding on response actions.

The PSNP also, in its second phase (2010–15), put in place a RFM, which enables horizontal expansion during times of crisis. The RFM allows for financial pre-positioning and the subsequent disbursement procedures that enable a more rapid response. Hobson and Campbell (2012) examine the RFM experience in 2011 and find that it allowed the PSNP to cover an additional 3.1 million beneficiaries. They compare existing emergency response mechanisms (taking 13 months from initial assessments, and nine months from the launch of an appeal, to deliver emergency

6 HSNP Scalability Guidelines 2016.

transfers) with the PSNP RFM, which used a Rapid Verification of Needs process to then launch a request for RFM funds and deliver transfers within six weeks. However, the RFM was triggered only once between 2010 and 2015, and concerns were raised in the design for 2015–20 that the current regional contingency system was preventing its triggering at critical times. In 2015–20, the RFM will be annually budgeted and the regional contingency abolished, and the PSNP will take over the response to transitory needs normally required of the humanitarian system (ibid.).

The examples of Kenya and Ethiopia are frequently cited as models for shock-responsive social protection, and several national governments and development partners are exploring the opportunity to put in place systems for humanitarian assistance to piggyback on new or existing social protection programmes. Uganda is one of those countries: the government, with support from the World Bank, is planning a satellite-based early warning system that would trigger the contingency fund for NUSAF's DRF component to finance the scale-up of public works activities during a crisis. This will be piloted in Karamoja, for potential scale-up to other districts in the Greater North.

Whereas the examples from the PSNP and HSNP make a convincing argument for using social protection to deliver more timely and cost-efficient disaster response, it is important to take into account the preconditions that had to be in place for the systems to scale up assistance temporarily during crisis situations.

Hobson and Campbell (2012) identify four key elements that had to be in place for the Ethiopian RFM to work during the 2011 drought:

1. Effective **early warning systems** need to be in place to indicate the need for a response as early as possible.

2. **Contingency plans** need to be put in place, so that triggers, funds and roles and responsibilities are agreed among key actors before a crisis hits.

3. **Contingency financing** needs to be ready and available to avoid the major time delays associated with the appeal process.

4. Adequate **institutional arrangements and capacity** need to be in place to allow the pre-prepared plans to be implemented.

'When the preconditions are met, the RFM easily outperforms the humanitarian system in terms of verifying needs and disbursing resources for response to be delivered through government systems' (Hobson and Campbell, 2012: 10). Ensuring these key elements are in place increases the anticipatory capacity of systems, which includes their preparedness for specific shocks. In the case of Ethiopia, as well as Kenya, the system and the anticipatory action taken facilitated faster response that aimed at helping people absorb the negative impact of drought. This is one example where it becomes evident that the same intervention can contribute to different resilience capacities.

## Contributions to adaptive capacity

Whereas some conclusions can be made about the contributions of social protection programmes to absorptive and anticipatory capacity, the picture is less clear when it comes to adaptive capacity. Yet adaptive capacity is critical to move from recurring (yet potentially more timely and cost-efficient) shock response and safety nets to sustainable livelihoods. The ability of social protection to build livelihoods and resilience in advance of long-term climate change is poorly understood, and few social

protection programmes explicitly incorporate climate change adaptation into their design (Johnson et al., 2015).

What emerged from the case studies is that social protection programmes can in some cases have the unintended side-effect of supporting adaptation, but in other cases can lead to maladaptation. The limited analysis of programme impact on the environment and on the long-term sustainability of current livelihoods further provides little evidence to make strong claims on the contributions social protection is making to people's adaptive capacity.

**During particularly dry years, farmers extend their agricultural activities to the wetlands and start to cultivate rice or vegetables. This in turn damages the wetlands, which have a critical role to play in preserving the local ecosystem.**

Uganda's SAGE, for example, aims for economic empowerment rather than building resilience to climate-related shocks and stresses. Consequently, evaluations provide little evidence on the programme's impact on beneficiaries' capacity to adapt in the long term. Findings from the qualitative research at the national, district and beneficiary level revealed that recipients of the SCG were able to reduce their reliance on cutting firewood, which can be considered a maladaptive coping strategy. In Apac, one of the common types of casual income generation among rural households is cutting trees to produce charcoal, which is sold on the roadside to buyers who sell it in urban areas. Charcoal production increases during the lean season since

it is one of the few ways people can access cash to buy food. According to local district officials, deforestation for charcoal is having a negative environmental impact on the humidity levels of soil and exacerbates the impact of dry spells on agricultural production. During particularly dry years, farmers extend their agricultural activities to the wetlands and start to cultivate rice or vegetables. This in turn damages the wetlands, which have a critical role to play in preserving the local ecosystem. The receipt of regular reliable cash transfers allows beneficiaries to abstain from natural resource extraction.

The absorptive function of the cash transfer can in this way have a positive impact on the capacity of households and the environment to adapt, but may require more active steering from programmes as it can also lead to unintended maladaptive practices. In Ethiopia, Weldegebriel and Prowse (2013) find PSNP participation may be linked to a striking increase in off-farm income from natural resource collection. 'Whilst households generate only 6% of income from off-farm sources, the recourse to natural-resource extraction can only be interpreted as a negative adaptation strategy and one that may increase households' vulnerability in the long term… the programme may be perpetuating dependence on activities that can aggravate environmental problems such as deforestation and land degradation, thus undermining longer-term agricultural productivity' (p.51). While these findings should be treated with caution, the authors do suggest programmes like the PSNP, unless they incorporate a long-term vision that includes the changing nature of shocks and stresses, may not be helping smallholder farmers diversify income sources and build resilience in the long term.

The Uganda and Ethiopia examples are interesting since they look at two similar interventions – cash transfers – yet in one case the

cash has allowed elderly people to opt out of natural resource extraction, whereas this has increased in Ethiopia. The underlying issue in both cases is the lack of opportunities to generate cash for rural households. How livelihoods can be supported in increasing their asset base and capacity to generate income is an issue discussed in the social protection community in the context of 'graduation' (which is currently lacking a focus on short- and long-term climate risks of movements out of poverty). The concepts of adaptive capacity and 'graduation' are both built on the assumption that accumulation of assets will have a long-lasting positive impact on the economies of households and their ability to gradually move out of poverty.

The Uganda and Ethiopia examples are interesting since they look at two similar interventions – cash transfers – yet in one case the cash has allowed elderly people to opt out of natural resource extraction, whereas this has increased in Ethiopia.

Programme evidence on maintaining long-term impacts of asset accumulation is limited, however. Participation in SAGE has increased the proportion of households owning any type of livestock, and has allowed beneficiaries to invest in existing livelihood activities and diversify risk by avoiding over-reliance on seasonal income sources. But the low size of the transfer (12% of total household consumption expenditure) makes any bigger livelihood impacts beyond basic consumption support unlikely (Merttens et al., 2015). The CT-OVC evaluation highlights that the programme at national level has had a significant impact on the accumulation of livestock, particularly for beneficiaries in

smaller-sized and female-headed households (Asfaw et al., 2013). The HSNP does not explicitly aim to make long-term impacts on livelihoods, since its main objective is to reduce hunger. However, beneficiaries who have received lump sum payments – for example those who have been formally registered for several months but have not been able to receive the transfer – have made investments in income-generating activities (e.g. buying bulk goods and selling them, opening a small kiosk).

These investments may lead to long-term changes in livelihoods, but currently the evidence to substantiate this assumption is limited. Increases in assets alone do not necessarily indicate an increased capacity to adapt or to move out of poverty. Maxwell et al. (2013) suggest the PSNP appears to protect assets during the hungry season but note that, despite a steady improvement in food security indicators between 2011 and 2013, there was no corresponding improvement in the levels of household assets in the same time period. They argue that households may be trapped in a low level equilibrium – below a critical threshold of assets at which growth can become self-sustaining.

There is a widely held view that programmes like the PSNP will achieve significant growth in assets and agricultural productivity and allow households to graduate into independent, sustainable livelihoods only where strong complementary programmes exist (e.g. Marriotti et al., 2016; Slater et al., 2016). Neither the transfers alone, nor the transfers in combination with community assets established through public works, is deemed enough. There is some evidence on the PSNP to partially support the view that broader programmes are required, derived from analysis of the extent to which cash transfers alone versus joint transfers from the OFSP/HABP affect agricultural output, yields, fertiliser use and agricultural investments among farmers growing cereals in Ethiopia. A combination of both programmes has led to

improvement in the use of fertiliser and enhanced investments likely to improve agricultural productivity among households receiving both programmes but mixed effects on actual yields. In the case of PSNP-only participants, there has been no effect on agricultural inputs use or productivity, and limited impact on agricultural investments (Hoddinott et al., 2012).

The HSNP, for example, does not aim to build more sustainable livelihoods through the cash transfer alone, but the programme is situated within the EDE framework, which sets out priority actions for building sustainable livelihoods in ASALs. These actions are focused on supporting pastoralist livelihoods and strengthening existing coping mechanisms (reducing/increasing herd size, mobility, loaning animals) through better access to markets, value chain development and access to veterinary services. Additionally, improved management of water, crops and rangeland resources aims to contribute to more sustainable natural resource management and water-use efficiency.

Linkages will have to be made to programmes that specifically support livelihoods – rather than expecting a 'trickle-down' effect of community assets and natural resource preservation on people's resilience. The link between assets built through public works and people's livelihoods is often broken or non-existent. The PSNP public works activities, including road and school construction, tree planting and water-harvesting had no significant impacts on agricultural impacts over the period 2006–12 (Filipski et al., 2016). Lack of impact of community assets on livelihoods is also observed in NUSAF. This is partly related to the fact that programme design does not take into account the drivers of low productivity and food insecurity. Main negative factors affecting household's food security are a combination of unpredictable weather patterns and little access to technology and good-quality inputs, with impacts on the productivity of

agricultural livelihoods. The community assets and infrastructure built under NUSAF 2 did not address these fundamental constraints to helping people adapt to climate change in the long term (McCord et al., 2013).

In sum, the contributions that social protection programmes can make to increase adaptive capacity needs to be further unpacked. This includes questioning a widely held assumption that an increase in household assets – or an improvement in community assets – has a direct positive and sustainable impact on people's livelihoods. Social protection alone will probably not build adaptive capacity; it requires linkages to other programmes that address some of the underlying causes of food insecurity, which, beyond climate shocks, are linked to local economy dynamics. Even though social protection may not actively contribute to adaptive capacity, though, those designing social protection programmes should consider the implications for adaptation or maladaptation strategies to avoid undermining resilience-building efforts.

# 3. ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS

IMAGE: FLORE DE PRENEUF / WORLD BANK

When analysing the five social protection programmes in Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia, we identified four analytical themes that can feed into wider discussions around the role of social protection in resilience-building. This section discusses the outcomes that social protection can have at different levels (environmental, household/individual and institutional/systems) and distinguishes between inherent versus auxiliary social protection resilience outcomes. The term 'isomorphic mimicry' is then introduced, which opens up a discussion around the impact of the form and function of programmes on resilience outcomes, before looking at the need to align programme objectives with institutional capacity to avoid 'premature load-bearing' of social protection programmes that might not be able to deliver on all 3As.

## Inherent versus external social protection outcomes

Social programmes can take many forms: from unconditional or conditional cash transfers, through public works programmes where the transfer comes in the form of a wage for providing labour, to programmes that combine cash transfers with a wide range of complementary activities such as asset transfers, training and access to financial services. One key insight emerging from our assessment is the importance of differentiating between the key inherent, intrinsic elements of social protection – that is, providing a transfer (cash, voucher or in kind) – and those broader and wider elements of programme design and implementation that can themselves produce outcomes. Examples of the latter include the assets created not because of the transfer but through the requirement to provide labour for public works; or the institutional systems – such as regular monitoring of vulnerability indicators.

Why is the distinction important? Because the creation of assets or conservation activities through public works (e.g. the PSNP and NUSAF) can take place in the absence of a social protection programme, they are not tied uniquely to social protection. So, just as it has been shown that in Kenya the HSNP has contributed to the civic engagement of beneficiary households not because of the transfer they receive but because beneficiaries are required to get ID documents, so a number of the resilience outcomes identified here come not from social protection itself but from specific design elements that affect the broader physical and institutional dimensions of resilience (Table 3).

**Table 3: Potential intrinsic versus auxiliary outcomes**

| AUXILIARY ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES | INTRINSIC HOUSEHOLD/INDIVIDUAL OUTCOMES | AUXILIARY INSTITUTIONAL / SYSTEMS |
|---|---|---|
| **Absorptive** | | |
| Contributions to increasing the environment's capacity to absorb through e.g. soil and water conservation activities that form part of public works programmes. | Cash transfers allow people to meet basic consumption needs even during times of shocks.<br>Assets and savings accumulated through cash transfers provide buffers. | Putting in place effective delivery mechanisms that can deliver assistance even during times of crisis. |
| **Anticipatory** | | |
| Increasing preparedness by supporting infrastructure to reduce disasters, e.g. building flood walls through public works programmes. | Cash transfers provide people with the ability to save in anticipation of a shock. | Putting in place delivery mechanisms, contingency funds and operational procedures (including trigger, target group) to deliver assistance through social protection programmes following a disaster. |
| **Adaptive (social protection +)** | | |
| Promoting adaptation through reforestation, conservation farming as part of asset-building programmes. | Enabling households to improve their livelihoods through asset-building and income generation activities that are less vulnerable to climate risks. | Providing linkages between social protection and other livelihoods programmes. |

Differentiating between inherent features of social protection and wider, auxiliary design elements casts important light on the role of social protection in building resilience capacities. Though rather too many programme evaluations fail to differentiate between these different elements, those that do find the following: transfers themselves make a strong contribution to people's absorptive capacity but have a much smaller impact on anticipatory capacity – largely by allowing households to build up savings. The impact of the transfers themselves on adaptive capacity is strong in theory (e.g. in the theories of change and

programme documentation in asset-building programmes) but is not yet demonstrated in practice. But beyond the transfers themselves there is some reasonably substantial evidence that the development of institutions or systems to support social protection policies and programmes can in itself enhance anticipatory capacities in particular. Here, the emphasis is on the anticipatory capacities within systems rather than beneficiary households. The use of a vegetation index to scale up the HSNP in Kenya and the contingency budgets and RFM in Ethiopia's PSNP provide good examples. Single registry systems could provide a useful mechanism through which to identify and reach households in the case of a specific shock or stress (Bastagli, 2014). The impacts of public works – particularly environmental impacts – are far more difficult to isolate and discern. Many appraisals depend on perceptions of the impact on, for example, soil loss or vegetation cover, rather than on more objective and verifiable measures of impact derived using control groups to provide a counterfactual.

## Isomorphic mimicry

Looking across the various programmes reviewed as part of the study, it is striking how much similarity there is in the form of programmes, in terms of their design and implementation mechanisms, and how much diversity in their objectives – that is, the functions they seek to provide.

NUSAF and the PSNP, for example, both combine interventions of consumption support through short-term or seasonal cash for work with asset-building (at the community and household level). The HSNP, CT-OVC and SAGE, on the other hand, provide regular cash transfers over several years – yet differ in their objectives. Analysis across these programmes allows us to reflect

on the relative importance of their form (this includes design and implementation) versus their function, or stated objective, as well as the importance of coherence between the two and the capacity to implement.

First, when it comes to objectives, two similar programmes in terms of their function – the HSNP and CT-OVC – differ in their objectives and policy narratives. The HSNP forms part of the key resilience policy framework on EDE and is managed by the NDMA. It was designed specifically to address recurring food crises in drought-prone areas to reduce the risk of recurring humanitarian crises. The CT-OVC, on the other hand, is implemented by the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Services and was put in place in the mid-2000s as a response to the HIV/AIDS crisis. Despite these differences in institutional homes and overarching objectives, they hardly differ in what they do or in their impact – as both deliver a similar amount of cash to vulnerable households. Impact evaluations suggest both support recipients to meet their consumption needs, facilitate school attendance of children, pay for health care and purchase small livestock (Ward et al., 2010; Merttens et al., 2013). Similarly, SAGE in Uganda aims to economically empower categorically vulnerable groups through a regular income transfer and – similarly to the CT-OVC in Kenya – is not framed around a resilience narrative but leads to absorptive outcomes and potentially supports adaptation.

This highlights that programmes that have a similar form contribute to a similar extent to the 3As, regardless of whether they specifically aim to do so. This is not to say that resilience objectives are irrelevant or that they do not influence programme delivery. Where the HSNP appears to outperform the CT-OVC, this appears to be because of broader delivery elements rather than the transfer itself. The HSNP was designed from

the start in a way that allowed it to deliver cash effectively in drought-prone areas with limited infrastructure and a highly mobile population. Whereas there were some initial problems with timely delivery, the programme has learnt and improved the timeliness of delivery significantly in comparison with the other cash transfer programmes (MLEAA, 2016).

Compared with basic cash transfers, NUSAF covers a more complex range of interventions, and changes in objectives over time are visible. NUSAF is now in its third phase, each of which has cited different core objectives. It has shifted from supporting peace and reconciliation in NUSAF 1, to improving infrastructure and access to basic services in NUSAF 2, to building the resilience in NUSAF 3 (McCord et al., 2013).[7] However, over the period of time during which NUSAF has operated, and despite these substantial shifts of objective, its core activities have remained more or less the same. The programme has provided and continues to provide short periods of public works, provides household income support through asset transfers and focuses on improving community infrastructure and assets. Furthermore, given the lack of evidence on the impacts of the assets created or rehabilitated through NUSAF 2, as well as the short-term nature of income support provided through the public works, SAGE in Uganda arguably has a stronger impact on resilience capacities than NUSAF 2 – and yet does not state, either explicitly or implicitly, the intention to do so.

The wider development literature provides some insights into the challenges that emerge when programmes' form and function appear relatively disconnected. Pritchett et al. (2010), exploring how institutions often find themselves caught in capability

7 See also Uganda PRDP NUSAF 2 and Project Information Document (Appraisal Stage) NUSAF 3 – P149965.

traps that undermine the transition to improved developmental governance, identify a phenomenon they call 'isomorphic mimicry'. In this, development actors copy the form of other organisations or institutions but not the functions that those original forms are meant to deliver. It appears, when we consider programmes in Kenya and Uganda, that something similar may be present in social protection, where either highly similar forms of programme are then expected to play very different roles or functions or the functions of a single programme change remarkably over time, with unremarkable shifts in the form of the programme.

This leaves us wondering whether paying attention to form could be more important than getting preoccupied with the function of programmes when it comes to social protection and resilience. Put more bluntly, we suggest that, in the absence of a robust, evidence-based theory of change about how a specific programme may contribute to a particular outcome, it may be better to focus on delivering programmes well and providing reliable, efficient and effective delivery mechanisms, rather than changing programme objectives without changing the form and capacity to implement.

Generally speaking, social protection's capacity to contribute to the 3As can be compromised if coherence between the objective, programme design and implementation is missing. In cases where there is a missing link between the resilience objective of a programme and its design, the outcomes are unlikely to be achieved (e.g. NUSAF, McCord et al., 2013). In programmes that do not specifically aim to address climate risks in their objective, the design and implementation still need to be cognisant of the risk climate shocks pose to programme outcomes (e.g. Ethiopia, Weldegebriel and Prowse, 2013). And last but not least, good implementation is critical for programme impact. In some cases,

good implementation might by default contribute to the 3As, such as in the case of well-implemented categorically targeted cash transfers.

**Figure 2: Isomorphic mimicry and social protection programmes**

| Programme A | Programme B | Programme C |
|---|---|---|
| Transfer: $10 | Transfer: $10 | Transfer: $10 |
| Frequency: monthly | Frequency: monthly | Frequency: monthly |
| Targeting basis: poverty | Targeting basis: poverty and age | Targeting basis: poverty and age |
| Location: northern provinces | Location: northern and other provinces | Location: northern and other provinces |
| **Objective** | **Objective** | **Objective** |
| Enhance resilience to climate change | Support vulnerable children | Support the elderly |

## Premature load-bearing and institutional capacity

Expectations of social protection are high, even in sub-Saharan Africa, where it is a relatively fledgling policy response. Given social protection's modest impacts on all but absorptive capacity, the evidence presented here suggests that the function of programmes needs to align with their form – including investing sufficiently in the capacity to implement. Otherwise, we may be 'asking too much too soon of too little too often' (Pritchett et al., 2010: 37). NUSAF in Uganda provides one example of the

weight of diverse expectations of programmes over time and limited evidence to suggest progress towards achieving them (McCord et al., 2013). The story in Ethiopia is somewhat different. The PSNP is not perfect. Its objectives are similarly ambitious to those of NUSAF and they have evolved over a relatively similar timeline, but monitoring and evaluation systems do demonstrate a clearer commitment to a slow, realistic, patient and considered evolution of the programme on the part of governments and development partners. In the first few years of the PSNP, rapid appraisal missions prioritised identifying implementation problems quickly and sought to rein in some of the overly ambitious targets (for example that all 5.5 million households on the programme would graduate into independent and sustainable livelihoods within three years).

Based on our analysis, the experience of the PSNP falls squarely into the category defined by Pritchett et al. (2010) as 'positive wishful thinking' – that is, that in which ambitious targets create commitment, energy, enthusiasm and positive pressure and actions towards a particular goal and contrasts sharply with other situations in which 'goals, plans and targets… are not anchored in grounded expectations of the feasible' (p.37).

> *'Some of the key challenges for forward-looking decision-making are capacity constraints, unreliable and short-term funding, donor interests and lack of information' (NGO representative, Uganda).*

Given the ways in which the strong rhetoric on linking social protection and resilience contrasts with the evidence on actual outcomes in Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia, it is clear that greater consideration of the capacity to deliver programmes is required, as well as more process evaluations that generate the necessary evidence to adjust and improve the quality of programme delivery.

It is surprising, though, how little attention is paid to implementation capacity and wider contextual opportunities and constraints. Hobson and Campbell (2012) demonstrate the importance of strong institutions and pre-existing systems and procedures in making the PSNP more shock-responsive using the RFM. Slater and Bhuvanendra (2012) note that, in the majority of locations where climate shocks are prevalent, coverage of social protection programmes remains scant. Integrating multiple objectives within social protection programmes comes at considerable institutional and operational cost (Slater et al., 2016). Overall, among the programmes on which this research is based, we find a number of 'paper tigers' – programmes that look good on paper but, because they fail to take into account implementation capacity, are not able to deliver in practice (Pritchett et al., 2010).

The strongest and primary contribution social protection is currently making is to absorptive capacity at the individual/household level, as well as to some extent to the capacity of systems to be better prepared for a shock.

In conclusion, combining the analytical themes of intrinsic versus auxiliary outcomes, isomorphic mimicry and premature load-bearing, the following lessons start to emerge. First, across the range programmes analysed in this study, the strongest and primary contribution social protection is currently making is to absorptive capacity at the individual/household level, as well as to some extent to the capacity of systems to be better prepared

for a shock. This applies across programmes – regardless of whether they aim to build resilience or not.

Second, contributions to system anticipatory capacity has worked so far only in two programmes – the PSNP and HSNP – and has required significant investments and learning processes over years of implementation. Further, the basic delivery mechanisms of cash have to be in place and functioning well for any complementary anticipatory or shock-responsive element to work effectively. Whereas both programmes included resilience or response to climate risks in their objectives from a very early stage, it is simultaneous investment in implementation mechanisms that has allowed them to not only contribute to absorptive capacity but also build anticipatory capacity.

Social protection's contribution is less clear when it comes to adaptive capacity – despite it being increasingly incorporated into the objectives of asset-building programmes. We need to reflect on existing evidence that highlights a lack of coherence between function and form and assess whether we can expect social protection to actively contribute to building adaptive capacity through assets, or whether this requires more effective linkages with complementary programmes.

# 4. CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

IMAGE: MARTINA ULRICHS

This research looked at social protection programmes in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda with the objective of better understanding the role social protection can play in building people's capacity to absorb, anticipate and adapt to climate-related shocks and stresses. We find that, rather than designing programmes that singlehandedly aim to build resilience – within and beyond social protection – we need to understand their comparative advantage in contributing to each of the 3As and embed them in a broader development agenda that aims to build resilience, reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development in the long term.

For social protection, the following points need to be considered for policy and programming:

**Strengthen social protection's role in providing absorptive capacity.** Evidence from Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia makes a strong case for social protection's primary role being the one of a safety net that allows people to absorb shocks without suffering significant negative setbacks. It does so most convincingly by providing regular and predictable cash assistance to poor and vulnerable people. Its contribution to strengthening the anticipatory capacity of systems to be better prepared for specific shocks can be strong in cases where social protection programmes are well established with mechanisms and institutions that have the capacity to delivery transfers effectively.

**We need a better understanding of and a stronger evidence base on social protection's contributions to adaptive capacity**, which is not only important to avoid maladaptation but also critical for building sustainable livelihoods in the long term. For example, graduation models or strategies that aim to lift people out of poverty through a combination of consumption support, assets, savings, etc. are currently not sufficiently taking into account the impact climate shocks can have on programme's progress – or the need to support livelihoods that will have the capacity to adapt to increasing climate risks. Better collaboration and knowledge exchange between social protection and climate change adaptation actors could provide useful lessons on how to design livelihood promotion programmes that integrate a climate lens.

**Social protection programmes need to be cognisant of climate change risks**, for two reasons. First, the design of social protection programmes should integrate climate risks to ensure, where possible, that programmes do not lead to maladaptation. Second, climate risks can undermine a programme's objectives and impacts. To counter this, programmes can be designed so as to ensure they still have the desired impact despite climate

shocks, for example through vertical scale-up to increase the amount of support provided during crisis situations, as well as ensuring that the support provided is sufficient and adequate to allow people to meet their basic needs.

**Policy discussions around social protection and resilience need to go beyond shock-response.** Shock-responsive programmes increase the quality and timeliness of humanitarian assistance in emergency situations but they do not reduce chronic vulnerability, which, in combination with exposure to a shock, turns into disasters. Many social protection programmes in sub-Saharan Africa have emerged out of a need to stop decades of dependence on humanitarian assistance in regions of recurring food crisis. Efforts to deliver humanitarian assistance through social protection programmes need to ensure they do not shift the focus back to short-term assistance and undo decades of work to establish nationally owned safety nets.

**More focus needs to be placed on the quality of implementation to deliver on resilience objectives.** This is not to say that objectives are irrelevant – but they need to be coherent with the programme's theory of change, design and capacity to implement. We have to recognise that many social protection programmes are fledging and are not operating well enough to fulfil their potential across the 3As. Examples mentioned in this research highlight the importance of ensuring the quality of implementation to deliver on specific objectives. Across child grants, pensions or productive safety nets, in the end it is programmes' ability to deliver cash transfers on time in a reliable way that contributes to people's capacity to absorb and anticipate – rather than their explicit objective to build resilience to disasters.

**Expectations of what programmes can achieve in contributing to people's resilience capacities need to take into account the time and funding needed to put in place well-functioning programmes.** Social protection's most successful examples needed several years if not decades to effectively contribute to people's capacity to absorb. Sequencing efforts may be particularly wise in contexts with limited capacity to deliver complex programmes, to ensure the basic functions are in place and sustainable. Overburdening programmes from the start by aiming to meet too many objectives at once can reduce the potential for success in the short and long term.

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Published December 2016

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Cover image: Frederic Courbet
Designed and typeset by Soapbox, www.soapbox.co.uk

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