



# Delivering social protection in the aftermath of a shock:

Lessons from Bangladesh, Kenya, Pakistan and Viet Nam

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## Abstract

Helping households cope with covariate shocks that affect entire communities, or large parts of a country's population at the same time, is one of the objectives of social protection. In order to provide effective support in such circumstances, policies need to be timely, adaptive and adequate in terms of resources. This paper reviews the policy reforms aimed at scaling-up social protection provision, or protecting the poorest in the context of spending cuts, in the aftermath of shocks in Bangladesh, Kenya, Pakistan and Viet Nam, four countries which are subject to frequent covariate shocks and that have implemented a host of social protection policy adjustments. It identifies the main challenges encountered in social protection shock response and the trade-offs associated with alternative social protection instruments and policy adjustment options. The paper also discusses recent developments in securing adequate social protection financing and preparedness for shock response.

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# Abbreviations

ASAL	Arid and semi-arid lands
BDR	Bangladesh Rifles
BISP	Benazir income support programme
CaLP	Cash learning partnership
CLP	Chars Livelihoods Programmes (Bangladesh)
CT-OVC	Cash Transfers for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (Kenya)
DFID	Department for International Development
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EGHP	Employment generation for hardcore poor (Bangladesh)
ESFP	Expanded school feeding programme (Kenya)
EWS	Early warning systems
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FEWSNET	Famine Early Warning System Network (Kenya)
GFD	General food distribution (Kenya)
HSNP	Hunger and Safety Net work
IASC	Inter-agency standing committee (Kenya)
IDS	Institute for Development Studies
KKV	Kazi Kwa Vijana (Kenya)
KPK	Khyber Pakhtun Khawah (Pakistan)
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (Viet Nam)
NADRA	National database and registration authority
NDDCF	National Drought and Disaster Contingency Fund (Kenya)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NSNP	National Social Safety Net Programme (Kenya)
NSPS	National Social Protection Strategy (Bangladesh)
POS	Point of sale
PMT	Proxy means test
PWP	Public works programme
RERMP	Rural Employment and Road Maintenance Programme (Bangladesh)
SSN	Social safety net
VGD	Vulnerable Group Development (Bangladesh)
VGf	Vulnerable Group Feeding (Bangladesh)
WFP	World Food Programme

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# 1 Introduction

Helping households cope with covariate shocks is one of the primary objectives of social protection policy. In contrast with idiosyncratic shocks that affect individuals over the course of their lifetime, such as loss of employment and ill-health, covariate shocks commonly affect entire communities or large parts of a country's population at the same time. Examples include economic crises, disasters associated with extreme weather, climate or geological events and conflict-related shocks. Such shocks can have devastating economic and social impacts and contribute significantly to scaling back progress made in poverty reduction (Shepherd et al, 2013).

An earlier ODI Working Paper, Bastagli (2014), identified the main challenges to effective social protection shock response.<sup>1</sup> The paper highlighted that three policy features determine the effectiveness of social protection in such circumstances: timeliness, adaptability and adequacy in terms of levels and resources. In the aftermath of a shock, policy needs to be mobilised and implemented quickly and at a scale large enough to reach the high number of people affected.

Challenges to the timely and adequate delivery of social protection arise from a number of factors. The programme design requirements that facilitate adequate response may contrast with those adopted by social protection programmes designed to address vulnerability and risk in non-crisis times. Delivery challenges faced in regular times may be exacerbated by the disruption brought about by a shock. Finally, financial resources may come under strain as pressures for fiscal consolidation and declining government revenue are accompanied by growing demand for support.

Drawing on the experience of four countries that are highly vulnerable to covariate shocks and that have implemented a host of social protection policy adjustments and reforms in the aftermath of shocks – Bangladesh, Kenya, Pakistan and Viet Nam – this paper explores these issues further. More specifically, for the four case study countries, it identifies the central challenges encountered to timely and adequate social protection shock response and the policy adjustments and measures that have been undertaken to address them. The study is an output of the DFID-funded Shockwatch project and is primarily a desk-based literature review of published and unpublished documents on the four countries.

The paper is structured as follows. The next section clarifies the main terminology utilised and issues investigated and reviews the range of shocks experienced by the four countries and evidence of their impact. Section 3 examines the social protection reforms and adjustments which have been made in the aftermath of a shock in the four case-study countries. Initiatives covered here include efforts to scale-up provision and protect the poorest in the context of spending cuts (not programme retrenchment and related austerity measures). The next section addresses the challenges to effective social protection implementation, specifically

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<sup>1</sup> Bastagli, F. (2014) "Responding to a crisis: The design and delivery of social protection", ODI Working Paper N. 394.

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targeting and delivery, in the context of a covariate shock. It examines the approaches used to tackle such challenges including alternative targeting approaches and delivery mechanisms. Section 5 examines the ways in which the four countries have addressed the issue of social protection financing in a crisis. Section 6 reviews initiatives to improve shock response preparedness in the four countries, including efforts to further develop social protection programmes and systems and to strengthen coordination across different sectors working on risk and shock response. The final section concludes and offers policy implications of the study's findings.

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# 2 Social protection and shock response

## 2.1 Shocks type, scale, frequency and impact

### Shock type, scale and frequency

The countries selected for this study are highly vulnerable to covariate shocks, including economic crises, disasters associated with extreme weather, climate or geological events, and conflict-related shocks. Studies suggest that the frequency and severity of particular shocks are likely to increase in the future in all four countries. In all four cases, countries have experienced both shocks of sudden onset and more regular and predictable ones.

In Bangladesh, some of the worst shocks associated with natural disasters include the 1970s drought, the 1998 and 2004 floods and the 2007 Sidr cyclone. Because of the location and geography of Bangladesh, very large areas flood routinely every year. In addition, the country is also vulnerable to river flooding above the seasonal norms, cyclones and, to a lesser extent, drought (Wiggins et al., 2010). Since 1980, storms and floods have been the most common type of disaster: there have been 108 storms (including cyclones), 68 floods, 27 epidemics, 19 extreme temperature events, 7 earthquakes and 3 droughts (Prevention Web, 2013). Estimates report as many as 1.5million deaths from the famine in the aftermath of the 1974 floods and global food price increases (Sen 1981, Seaman & Holt 1980 cited in Wiggins et al., 2010). Major floods in 1988, 1998, 2004 and in 2007 affected an estimated 11 million (2007) to 68 million (1998) people. More than 500,000 deaths were reported due to the 1970 cyclone and its aftermath, while the 1991 cyclone caused 138,000 deaths (Rahman et al., 2011). In addition to events that may occur with more or less regularity, households in Bangladesh are vulnerable to seasonality in agriculture. High numbers of the poor face annual *monga*, a period of higher un/underemployment and food insecurity due to seasonality in agriculture. Households primarily reliant on agricultural wages find their pre-harvest purchasing power dropping drastically due to a rise in prices of food staples coupled with a fall in local labour demand and wages. Large areas in the north-west of Bangladesh are affected and it is a key cause of chronic poverty in these areas. An estimated 5 million poor people live in the *monga* prone districts (Rahman et al., 2011). Bangladesh is also vulnerable to economic shocks. The 2008 increases in world food prices for instance resulted in high (double-digit) inflation and the price of rice almost doubled between 2006 and 2008 (Matin et al., 2009).

Pakistan has suffered from flooding in the monsoon rains season almost every year over the past decade and the country regularly experiences earthquakes (of moderate and severe intensity) and coastal areas are prone to cyclones. Shocks of these kinds have affected millions of people, increasing poverty and vulnerability. The most significant shocks discussed in the literature in the last ten years and covered here include the 2005 earthquake in Kashmir and Northern Pakistan, displacement due to military operations in Khyber Pakhtun Khawah (KPK) province in 2009, the food, fuel and financial crisis in 2008, and the 2010 flooding.

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Of the ten largest disasters over the past three decades in Kenya, seven have been droughts (OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database, cited in Kerer, 2013). Major droughts occurred in 1998-2001, 2003/4, 2006, 2009 and 2011 (Cabot Venton et al., 2012). Other shocks experienced between 1980 and 2010 include two earthquakes, 30 epidemics, 34 floods, four landslides and one storm. A study of rural maize-legume farmers in Western and Eastern Kenya identified drought, flooding as well as crop pests and diseases as the most frequent and important climate-related production shocks over the last 10 years (Tongruksawattana, 2013). People living in Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) are the most vulnerable to the effects of drought, given the high rates of poverty and reliance on pastoral farming in the region. Areas of the north receive less than 290mm of precipitation a year, which is below a sufficient level for sustainable rainfed agriculture (Bailey, 2013). Kenya is also among the top 20 countries in the Fund for Peace's 2013 Failed States Index. Kenya experienced 2,244 incidents of political conflict between 2003 and 2013 (Bailey, 2013). There was widespread ethnic violence and looting, arson and destruction during January and February 2008, following the contested election results of 2007, resulting in around 1,200 deaths and the displacement of around 500,000 people (Gibson and Long, 2009).

In Viet Nam, common shocks include severe flooding and cyclones that wipe out lives and livelihoods (Beckman et al. 2002). 70 percent of the country's population live in areas subject to water-related natural disasters (Oxfam, 2008). The main shocks reviewed here include the November 1999 disaster floods in central Vietnam that affected eight provinces and caused widespread loss and damage (Beckman et al, 2002) and the 2009 slow-down in economic growth, arising in part from the sharp reduction in international demand for Vietnamese manufacturing products, and resulting in loss of jobs, increased underemployment, lower wages and lower incomes among workers (World Bank, 2010a). Hardship from the 2009 crisis was aggravated by reductions in and loss of remittances from overseas workers. The country's 2.4 million poor people and those who lost their jobs were those that suffered most as a result of the economic crisis (ASEAN, 2010).

For these four countries, studies also point to the likelihood for the frequency and severity of shocks to increase in the future. For example, climate change risks are expected to trigger more frequent and more intense disasters associated with extreme weather events. Bangladesh, Kenya, Pakistan and Viet Nam are all listed among the 12 most vulnerable countries worldwide on three out of five climate threats (World Bank, 2009). Indeed, the impact of climate change, already an important source of vulnerability is likely to become an increasingly urgent issue. In Bangladesh, for example, predictions point to increasing temperatures and monsoon precipitation, intensified cyclones, more severe droughts, and river bank erosion in the future (Rahman et al., 2011). In Viet Nam, increases in the intensity and frequency of both extreme weather events such as typhoons, flooding and drought, and more gradual events like sea level rises, salt water intrusion and warming temperatures are expected (Oxfam, 2008).

The frequency and severity of the impact of shocks are also influenced by a variety of economic and demographic factors. In the case of economic crises, the growing integration of economies has contributed to increasing countries' vulnerability to financial crises. The integration of the economy of the four case study countries into the global economy has intensified their exposure to financial crises and economic shocks, making them for instance vulnerable to the global food, fuel and financial crisis from 2008. In Bangladesh, exports have been the main transmission channel of the global crisis, notably the garments industry and the major

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commodity exports of frozen shrimp, leather, and jute products. In 2008, the readymade garments sector directly employed around 3 million workers (and indirectly many more), and the exports of woven and knitted garments in particular, fluctuated significantly in 2008 (Turk and Mason, 2009). Bangladesh also faced high inflation (double-digit) due to the increases in world food prices in 2008. Between January 2006 and August 2008, the national wholesale price of rice almost doubled from 16 Taka per kg to almost 31 Taka per kg (Matin et al., 2009) and high local food prices continued into 2011. In Viet Nam, whereas the increase in non-food prices in 2007 (by over 10 percent year on year) were the result of domestic developments, the surge in world prices of commodities, especially the rapid increases in the international prices of rice and oil had a significant impact (Binh, 2010). The severity of shock impacts can also be compounded and exacerbated by demographic trends such as urbanisation and migration. In Viet Nam, urbanisation, a shift towards greater employment in industry and services sector and the greater mobility of workers are associated with greater exposure of the population to economic and other types of shocks (World Bank, 2010a).

### **Shock impact**

Shocks can impact on prices, employment, wages, livelihoods, assets. They also have impacts on behaviour and trigger coping strategies as households respond to such changes. Covariate shocks can leave large numbers of people in need of support and emergency assistance. In Kenya, 3.8 million people were in need of emergency assistance following the 2011 drought (World Bank, 2013a). Yet even beyond this specific event, the World Bank estimates that between 2004 and 2012, the number of people in need of emergency assistance in Kenya was constantly at a level of at least 900,000 (World Bank, 2013a).

Many shocks are concurrent or occur shortly before or after one another, reinforcing the effects of individual shocks and making it difficult to identify the effects of a specific shock. In Bangladesh, Wiggins et al. (2010), report that the 1974 flooding, which contributed to a major increase in rice prices in the second half of 1974, coincided with a spike in world prices of rice. More recently, effects of the international food price spike were exacerbated by the impacts of “super cyclone Sidr” that occurred mid-November 2007, noted as the worst cyclone seen since 1991 (Wiggins et al., 2010). The cyclone’s damage was further compounded by India’s, Bangladesh’s main supplier of imported rice, announcement of severe restrictions on its exports and rice prices rose sharply from 2007 to 2008, almost doubling over this period (Wiggins et al., 2010).

This compounding effect of different shocks cautions against the attribution of outcomes to a single event. For example, a study of the impact of the global economic crisis of 2008/2009 on the Tana River district in Kenya found it difficult to attribute coping strategies to the economic crisis alone, given the multiple shocks experienced by households, including drought and ethnic conflict (Mukherjee and Nayyar, 2011).

Despite affecting entire communities or even entire countries, covariate shocks will typically affect different groups differently. For example, in Viet Nam, the 1999 floods had a large impact on the livelihoods of most people in the eight provinces affected. However, impacts varied by area and population group. The main loss for the lowland people, in addition to the loss of lives, was their rice in storage, animals and damage to the houses. In the hill land the main losses were the hill land crops which were being cultivated for food security and animal husbandry, and garden cash crops, such as pepper and fruit trees. In the mountains, the main impact was the damage to the land, especially close to the river, which was either eroded or inundated with sand and stone. Growing crops of cassava, banana and sugarcane

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were lost. These different impacts had major implications for food security and long-term sources of income (Beckman et al, 2002).

The 2008 global financial crisis also provides examples of the ways in which shocks affect different groups and may even benefit some while adversely affecting others. In Viet Nam, the global financial crisis led to a sharp reduction in international demand for Vietnamese manufacturing products, and resulted in lost jobs, increased underemployment, lower wages, and lower incomes in the sector. At the same time, rice exports increased by 20 percent in 2009. Given that many rice farmers live close to the poverty line, robust rice exports may have helped to mitigate the adverse social impact of the crisis (ASEAN, 2010). An Oxfam (2008) study shows how women and men are affected differently by climate change in two areas of Viet Nam because of the ways in which responsibilities are divided between the two groups, with women primarily responsible for providing food, water and fuel for the family and caring for the sick (Oxfam, 2008).

In Bangladesh too, the shocks have hit different groups differently. In the aftermath of the 2007 cyclone Sidr and 2007-2008 food and financial crisis, and associated sharp increases in the prices of food grains, some of the hardest hit groups were agricultural day labourers, female headed households, women and children (especially girls). The shocks appeared to exacerbate existing inequalities in income poverty, labour market participation, nutrition, to some extent schooling, and time poverty. For example, inequality at the national and community level were found to have been exacerbated in the food price crisis - the World Bank (2008a) reported increased inequality with rises in food prices reportedly raising the Gini index in Bangladesh by 5% (cited in Compton et al., 2010), and at the community level, the gains made by wealthier landowners from increased food prices did not translate into comparable increases of wages for rural labourers (cited in Compton et al., 2010). Indeed, despite nominal wage increases of wage workers, wages and incomes of the poor could not keep up with the increases in the prices of food leading to a decline in the real income of the poor (World Bank, 2008a). Moreover, the composition of the labour market was also affected by the crisis, including an increase in workers in the informal economy, and a reduction of female workers in the garment industry (Islam et al., 2011). Female headed households were found to be particularly adversely affected by the crisis, facing higher food insecurity and fewer options for income (work and credit) (Sulaiman, Parveen, and Das 2009; Compton et al., 2010). Furthermore, women and girls also faced increased time poverty, and girls' school dropout rates were higher than that of boys (Matin et al. 2009; World Bank, 2008a).

Studies on household coping strategies highlight additional shock effects. A five-country study by IDS in 2009 on the food, fuel and financial crisis found that in Kenya, households were spending a greater share of income on food, buying lower cost items, reducing the quality and diversity of food, eating less, and going hungry. Households were also spending less on healthcare, leading to increased health problems. Other reported impacts included a rise in risky sexual behaviour and rising abandonment of children. Of the five countries examined, the effects were found to be most severe in Kenya, where the food and fuel crisis was exacerbated by the ongoing drought, political violence and displacement (IDS, 2009). A study of the household coping strategies following the 2007 election crisis found that households were much more likely to kill animals and sell durable goods in 2007 compared to the previous year (Dupas and Robinson, 2009). It also found that the crisis increased the likelihood that women supplying transactional sex would engage in unprotected sex. Finally, a study of the impact of the global economic crisis of 2008/2009 and compounding shocks (drought and ethnic conflict) on the Tana River district in Kenya (where 72% of the population live

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below the poverty line) highlighted that widely reported coping strategies included selling belongings to buy food, spending less on food and education per month, and borrowing (for higher income quintiles) (Mukherjee and Nayyar, 2011).

## **2.2 The role of social protection and links with humanitarian emergency relief**

Social protection can play a role in strengthening people's ex-ante risk management capacity, provide support during a crisis and promote recovery after a crisis. The focus of this paper is on the second of these objectives, namely on social protection during a crisis and the design and implementation details that facilitate or act as obstacles to effective crisis response. This attention to the operational dimension of social protection planning and delivery, alongside the emergency nature of shock response, implies a direct link to the disaster risk reduction (DRR), emergency and humanitarian response practices and literature. These are referred to in the paper with respect to the social protection policy design and planning implications that can be drawn from emergency response.

Although DRR and humanitarian interventions continue to be considered separately from social protection interventions, pursue separate objectives and may rely on different sets of tools, there is growing recognition of the potential for strengthened coordination across these sectors and social protection, for instance at the planning and preparation level, as discussed in Section 6.

Moreover, the strengthening of linkages across these sectors may be observed in the growing number of cases of relief or humanitarian programmes or efforts transforming into social protection or "development" programmes. Kenya's Hunger and Safety Net Programme (HSNP), an unconditional cash transfer targeted at the chronically food insecure, designed in 2005/6, is a case in point. Its design reflects a shift in thinking around appropriate responses to recurring food insecurity. Year on year emergency programming was increasingly seen as inappropriate to address a predictable seasonal and structural cause of food insecurity which could be met with a predictable programme response. Emergency food aid operations were also increasingly seen as limited in their capacity to mitigate the range of livelihood shocks faced by the poor in Kenya's ASAL region (DFID, 2007). Similar developments have been observed in the other case study countries too. In Bangladesh, the most notable changes in SSN programming include transforming relief programmes to development programmes (Ahmed et al., 2010).

Evidence from the case study countries indicates that social protection can play a powerful role in helping households cope with a wide range of covariate shocks. Bangladesh's SSN programmes have a documented record of shielding the poor from destitution (Grosh et al., 2011) and reports suggest that such programmes played an important role in helping to buffer the impacts of rising food prices during the 2008 global financial crisis. For example, the impact of the financial crisis is seen to have been considerably muted by the use of different employment creating schemes (Thant and Bauer, 2009). Self-perceived effects of the new 100 day employment guarantee programme found that more than three-fourths of the participants reported an improvement in their overall economic condition thanks to the programme.<sup>2</sup> 77% of participant households reported an improvement in their food consumption, either in terms of quality, or quantity, or both. Programme

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<sup>2</sup> The 100 day employment programme was initiated in 2008 with the objective of providing 100 days of employment per household during lean seasons of the crop production cycle through labour intensive infrastructure projects. The programme aimed at covering 2 million households (Islam et al., 2011).

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participation also helped households to avoid migrating, and offered alternative work opportunities, particularly to women (NFPCSP et al., 2009).

Despite these positive findings and the clear evidence of the potential beneficial impact of social protection, the case studies also highlight major challenges encountered by social protection provision in the event of a shock. The need for *timely* and *rapid* response is a major challenge. So is the provision of *adequate levels* of support.

Delays in the delivery of social protection in the aftermath of Pakistan's 2005 earthquake were a major limitation to intervention effectiveness. Cash transfer beneficiaries were identified within 4 months of the earthquake and cash grants payments were first made in April 2006, five months after the disaster hit. This time lag was partly the result of challenges associated with the setting up of targeting, disbursement, and monitoring systems through an entirely new government agency with no prior experience of delivering cash transfers.<sup>3</sup> Additional challenges were given by the remote location and the difficulty of monitoring indicators in an area with a large informal economy (Heltberg, 2007). Considerable delays in social protection delivery, especially to rural areas, were also recorded in Bangladesh during the food price crisis. In addition to being late, most direct assistance to rural households was limited (Compton et al. 2010).

Low levels of transfers are another constraint to effective social protection in the context of shocks. As will be discussed in the following sections on the details of specific social protection instruments, transfer levels are a critical component to policy effectiveness. Low benefit levels, for instance in Viet Nam, where social assistance benefits are calculated from a baseline level equivalent to 18.6% of the minimum wage or 32.5% of the poverty line, pose a challenge to providing meaningful support to vulnerable households (Bender and Rompel, 2010).

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<sup>3</sup> The earthquake reconstruction and the livelihood cash grants were organised by the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority, which was created after the earthquake in the Prime Minister's Secretariat.

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# 3 Social protection design and shock response

This section examines the types of social protection measures implemented in the aftermath of different shocks and the adjustments made to existing programmes to scale-up social protection and protect the poorest in the four case-study countries. It considers the following reforms:

- The introduction of new social protection policies
- The extension of coverage and duration of existing policies
- The adjustments of transfer amounts and values
- The introduction of extraordinary payments or transfers
- The modification and relaxation of programme rules to facilitate participation.

These are reviewed in the four countries with respect to social assistance programmes, social insurance programmes and work-related programmes. The countries examined here have relied on a wide range of instruments in the aftermath of different shocks. For example, in Bangladesh, in the aftermath of the recent ‘triple F’ crisis, major interventions included food subsidies and rationing, food distribution to vulnerable groups, including school feeding programmes, and public works programmes (McCord and Vandemoortele, 2009). In Viet Nam, the main poverty-targeted policy responses to the ‘triple F’ crisis took the form of a one-off cash transfer payment to low-income households, housing support and a regionally targeted programme for the poorest districts (World Bank, 2010a).

It should be noted that developments in social protection programmes that occur in the aftermath of a shock are not necessarily the direct response to a particular shock. They may have been planned in advance of a shock. This is the case for example in Bangladesh, where the significant expansion in social protection spending reported during 2008 and 2009 was previously planned and not directly in response to the crisis (see McCord and Vandemoortele, 2009; Rahman et al., 2009). At the same time, even when reforms may have been planned in advance, shocks commonly act as a trigger to accelerate planned reforms. This was the case in Viet Nam’s unemployment insurance reform (more below). Moreover, identifying the policy design and implementation features that facilitate or act as obstacles to timely and adequate social protection delivery does not require establishing a direct link between a shock and policy reform.

## 3.1 Social assistance

Social assistance programmes include cash and in-kind transfers and are non-contributory, commonly financed out of general taxation or external aid. This

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section reviews programme adjustments and reforms by type of instrument (i.e. cash, food and in-kind, subsidies). Although these are primarily treated separately here, some programmes include multiple types of transfers as different components.

#### **Diversification of social assistance transfers**

In fact, one of the adjustments made to facilitate flexibility and improve the adequacy of responsiveness to shocks consists in the diversification of transfer types within programmes, for example through the inclusion of a food transfer component in what was an exclusively cash transfer programme prior to a shock.

In Kenya, for instance, the introduction of different transfers in combination with each other – such as a voucher programme, mainstreaming cash transfers into food for assets and mixing cash, vouchers and food – have been supported with the objective of promoting a more flexible and effective approach to emergency and development (WFP, 2011).

In Bangladesh, the Chars Livelihoods Programme (CLP), an asset transfer programme which targets poor households in the *chars* sand islands, includes cash components designed to provide support in the event of specific shocks. For instance, it includes erosion grants, paid to poor beneficiaries subjected to erosion to help them rebuild their homes. In association with the programme, emergency grants are also made available to anyone in the community for one-off disasters such as storms or fires. Moreover, CLP is designed to help households cope with *monga* by implementing a seasonal safety net stipend for those who cannot work.

#### **Cash transfers**

New cash transfers have been introduced in response to a wide range of shocks in all of the countries examined here. In Kenya, the Urban Food Subsidy Cash Transfer was launched in 2011 as a response to high levels of food price inflation, with the objective of improving the livelihood security of the most vulnerable people living in urban informal settlements, who experience cumulative shocks and stresses (World Bank, 2013a). In Pakistan, the government-led Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) cash transfer programme was introduced with the objective of addressing the impact of rising food prices in 2008 and of partially offsetting the impact of inflation on the purchasing power of the poor (Khawaja et al., 2010).<sup>4</sup>

In Viet Nam, in response to the economic slowdown, a one-off cash transfer to the poor was the main safety net measure implemented as part of its 2009 stimulus package, which accounted for about 8.3 per cent of GDP, around 16 per cent of which went to social protection programmes (ASEAN, 2010). The programme was implemented just before the Tet, the Chinese New Year in March 2009, and each individual beneficiary received a direct transfer of VND 200,000, or US\$ 12 (Binh, 2010). Beneficiaries were identified using the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) poor list which contains information on approximately 2.3 million households and which permitted a rapid identification of participants (ASEAN, 2010). This type of one-off intervention can provide precious relief to beneficiary households. At the same time, its effectiveness is limited where the effect of a shock is sustained for a longer period of time.

In addition to the introduction of new cash transfers or one-off payments, another response to shocks consists in the expansion of existing cash transfer programmes to reach new beneficiaries. In Kenya, the Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable children (CT-OVC) programme for example, which reached 500

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<sup>4</sup> As of 2011, the government was in the process of expanding the program to cover 1.6 million families (Fiszbein et al., 2011).

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households in 2005, increased its coverage from 25,000 households in 2008, to 70,000 in 2009 and 100,000 in 2010. The government's spending on the programme increased from US \$800,000 in 2005 to \$9 million by 2009 (Ikiara, 2009). Although there had been plans to scale up the programme before the global financial crisis, these were accelerated in 2008-09 (Fiszbein et al., 2011).

Another measure available to governments to scale-up support in response to a crisis is the upward adjustment of cash transfer values. This is a response that can be implemented rather rapidly, although its impact is limited to existing cash transfer beneficiaries if it is not accompanied by an increase in coverage. Uprating cash transfer values is particularly critical in the context of inflation, when the real value of transfers is eroded. The failure to adjust transfers values over time limits their effectiveness. In Kenya, for example, the HSNP cash transfer could buy only one-third of the food basket against which it was calibrated within just 18 months of the programme's inception in 2007 (Devereux, 2012). As the Government of Kenya (2012) has observed, "The adequacy of support provided to households is questionable, as cash transfers are rarely adjusted for inflation" (p. 11).<sup>5</sup>

In Bangladesh, inflation associated with the 2008 crisis further exacerbated the problem of low benefit levels (Grosh et al., 2011; see also Islam et al., 2011 on pensions). In response, adjustments to benefit values were implemented for some policies. For example, the value of cash pensions for the elderly and widowed poor, which was seen as too low to compensate for the food prices at their height, was revised upwards in 2008/9 (Hossain et al., 2009; ILO, 2010a).

#### **Food and in-kind transfers**

A common response to shocks consists in the introduction of new food and in-kind transfer programmes or extension of existing ones. In fact, in some of the countries reviewed by this paper, the main form of safety net support offered to vulnerable populations has been in the form of food (e.g. food aid mobilised by the government and the international community in response to crises such as drought and floods has historically provided Kenya's main safety net; Government of Kenya, 2012).

The expansion of existing food transfer programmes has been one of the main scale-up responses to shocks in Bangladesh. It is generally viewed for instance, that the food transfers implemented in 1998 helped to limit the impact of the 1998 flood, and avoid a food crisis, unlike in 1974 (del Ninno and Dorosh, 2003; Marzo and Mori, 2012). At the time, the government transferred food to about 4 million poor households and helped limit the impact of the flood on household access to food and to maintain children's nutritional status (del Ninno and Dorosh, 2003). In response to the 'triple F', in 2008, the Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programme was expanded by 25 percent to reach 7.5 million households. Expansion in the coverage of the VGF was accompanied by an increase in its ration, from 10kg to 15kg. A key issue concerns the availability of food stock. These types of scale-up are possible when governments hold adequate emergency food stock (Demeke et al, 2009).

As with other policy adjustments, scale matters. Increases in the coverage and values of in-kind transfers provide valuable support in the event of a shock. However, adjustments may still be low or inadequate with respect to changing circumstances and need. In Bangladesh, for example, analysts have highlighted that food-based safety net programmes, including the VGF, provide insufficient energy

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<sup>5</sup> The Government of Kenya's (2012) report adds, "the government must develop clear guidelines on how to increase the value of safety net cash benefits in response to inflation to ensure that these benefits achieve their intended impact" (p. 17).

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(kilo-calories) and make too little difference to a poor person's energy intake and have called for an increase in the size of transfers (e.g. Matin et al., 2009).

One of the preferred modalities of food transfer relies on schools, via school feeding programmes. The option of relying on existing infrastructure and human resources can indeed facilitate the distribution of food, while promoting other outcomes such as increased school attendance. In Kenya, the Expanded School Feeding Programme (ESFP) was initially designed to provide short-term assistance to offset the negative impact of drought on schooling and by 2009 reached over 1 million school children (Government of Kenya, 2012). Studies indicate that, in addition to providing precious support to beneficiaries, it has successfully prevented school children from dropping out of school and has helped ensure that they stay in school during drought periods (WFP, 2011).

### **Food subsidies**

Food subsidies can provide a rapid response tool to rapidly rising food prices. They can be run with little dedicated infrastructure and can be quick to set up if countries maintain buffer stocks and have food available. They can be very appealing politically if they provide some price relief to the most vocal consumers. For these reasons, and commonly when alternative policy options are not in place, governments may expand food subsidies in the aftermath of a shock (World Bank, 2008). At the same time, food subsidies can be costly, regressive and difficult to phase out at later stages, with important implications for policy financing and equity.

In Bangladesh, food subsidies in 2007 and 2008 operated through a fair price ration card (purchase of up to 20kg subsidised rice/wheat per month) and open market subsidised rice sale, which allowed the purchase of up to 5kg of subsidised rice per day. Reports indicate that the implementation of food subsidies in Bangladesh was not without its challenges. Confronted with the urgency of maintaining the prices of food grains within target ranges, the paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) was assigned with the job of selling government subsidised rice (Zohir et al, 2010). In both urban and rural areas there were reports that BDR outlets were charging prevailing market prices for products, especially rice (Wiggins et al., 2010). Furthermore, in Bangladesh, reports from participants in focus group discussions during the crisis suggested that although subsidised sales were welcome, they were not on a large enough scale outside of the capital (Wiggins et al., 2010).

## **3.2 Social insurance**

Social insurance can be a powerful shock response tool.<sup>6</sup> By design, it incorporates elements of automation and can act as an automatic stabiliser by expanding as demand for support increases in the event of a shock. At the same time, coverage and benefit levels in the four country studies remain low and limit the potential support such programmes can provide. In Kenya for example, in 2010, contributory schemes covered an estimated 1% of the total population and those mostly employed in the formal sector (Government of Kenya, 2012).

Among the four countries examined, Viet Nam's social protection system has the strongest social insurance focus, with much emphasis in efforts to strengthen social protection over the years placed on expanding participation in social insurance programmes (World Bank, 2010a). This has included the establishment of a voluntary social insurance pillar aimed at providing an option for informal sector workers. Considerable progress has been made in expanding the coverage of

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<sup>6</sup> As well as acting as an ex-ante risk management instrument.

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mandatory social insurance (also, notably, coverage of social health insurance increased from 16.2 million people in 2003 to 34.5 million in 2006). Despite such efforts, voluntary social insurance coverage remains low, counting 500,000 members (Bender and Rompel, 2010).

Despite the persistent challenges to extending social insurance and securing its financial sustainability, Viet Nam provides examples of social insurance policy adjustments options in the aftermath of a shock. These include the upward revision of benefit values, the implementation of measures to facilitate social insurance participation and the acceleration of planned social insurance reforms.

During the 2008-9 economic crisis, several provisions were made to adjust different social insurance schemes. For example, the government of Viet Nam approved a 15 per cent increase in pensions starting in October 2008 (Binh, 2010). Initiatives to facilitate social insurance participation include relaxing participation requirements and providing direct support as firms and workers face difficulties in complying with social insurance contributions. The government of Viet Nam also launched a programme to provide interest-free loans to enterprises to support social insurance and severance payments. Through this programme, enterprises affected by the economic crisis and struggling to pay salaries, social insurance and severance payments were awarded an interest-free loan. Enterprises which had to lay off either 30% of the workforce or more than 100 workers were eligible to participate in the programme (Binh, 2010; Bender and Rompel, 2010). Finally, during the economic crisis, the government of Viet Nam also accelerated a planned reform to introduce an unemployment insurance scheme to be paid, by design, to workers with a contract of at least 12 consecutive months and awarding benefits of 60% of the average salary (Binh, 2010).

### **3.3 Work and labour-market interventions**

Work and labour-market interventions pursue a range of objectives in the context of a shock, including keeping people in jobs, creating new work opportunities to support incomes and maintaining and improving the employability of workers. Policy instruments include direct public employment to create new jobs (e.g. public works programmes), reduced working hours and on-the-job training to sustain labour demand and reduce labour costs for employers without having to dismiss workers, as well as training and job search assistance for the unemployed.

New public works programmes (PWP) introduced during the ‘triple F’ crisis include Bangladesh’s 100 day employment guarantee scheme (renamed Employment Generation for Hardcore Poor, EGHP, in 2009), launched in 2008 and focused on the extreme poor and geographic regions that are prone to food shortage with the objective of reaching 2 million households. In Kenya, the Kazi Kwa Vijana (KKV) PWP was launched in April 2009, to employ youth in rural and urban areas. It aimed to create up to 300,000 jobs by December 2009 (ILO and World Bank, 2012; Mweha, 2010).

Another response to shocks consists in the scaling up of existing PWPs. In Bangladesh, in the aftermath of the ‘triple F’ crisis, food allocations and employment generated by the Food for Work (FFW) (renamed Rural Infrastructure Development Programme) increased threefold between 2007/8 and 2008/9. Similarly, allocations to the Rural Employment and Road Maintenance Programme (RERMP) were increased in 2008/9 (Grosch et al, 2011). In response to cyclone Sidr, cash for work was expanded by the NGO Caritas Bangladesh, helping a reported 10,000 individuals with a cash for work programme.

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While PWPs hold potential for providing precious income support to poor households with a working member, the experience of the case-study countries suggests that they also display some limitations. For instance, they risk excluding the poorest and weakest or aggravating their state. For example, a food-for-work programme launched in the Kinango District of the Kenyan Coast Province in partnership with the World Food Programme was suspended after local leaders expressed their concerns that the programme's beneficiaries were in fact too hungry and too weak to engage in manual labour to earn their food rations. The Kenyan government ended the programme, admitting that it was inhuman to ask older people to dig water pans and trenches for hours at a time in the context of severe drought and famine (Caliari et al., 2010).

The objective of securing the participation of the poorest by setting low wages that will screen out those that are better off risks the adoption of wage levels that are so low that the support provided is negligible. In Bangladesh, a cash for work programme implemented following cyclone Sidr assumed that three month's work for one adult from participating households at a low 'self-targeting' salary would be sufficient to prevent "negative coping strategies, such as distress sales of assets or taking out high interest loans", although those evaluating "were not so sure" (Wiggins et al., 2010). Another study of the BRAC nutrition programme found that wages did not rise sufficiently to compensate for the rapid inflation in food prices. Also, wage rises lagged behind the inflation in food prices, which created significant difficulties for poor people dependent on wage labour for their livelihoods (Matin et al., 2009).

Another challenge to PWPs is that the demand for participating in the programme may exceed available places, leading to tensions and participant selection based on a range of criteria other than the official ones. In Bangladesh, the coverage of the 100-day employment programme was lower than planned and less than 25 percent of the extremely poor (Islam et al., 2011). Moreover, people felt benefits were accruing mostly to those with good connections to local government representatives (Hossain et al. 2009). This was aggravated by the gap between the numbers who would be eligible on criteria set, versus the resources available: "The most disturbing fact is that the majority of rural households—poor and non-poor—meet the official selection criteria for programmes. These criteria, therefore, provide the scope for exercising perverse discretion in the beneficiary selection process" (Ahmed et al. 2010; p. 12).

Another measure adopted in crisis contexts is job creation initiatives. In Viet Nam, job creation was supported by the National Job Creation Fund, through loans to informal sector and family businesses and creating 250,000 new jobs in 2009, according to MOLISA. The government also proactively worked with labour export companies to find new jobs for 15,000 overseas workers who were working abroad and were facing the risk of being laid off. It also aimed to find new jobs or provide financial support to 9,000 workers who returned home as a result of the financial crisis. Despite the low demand for labour in international labour markets, the government continued its programme to send more workers abroad. Efforts included improved vocational training for overseas workers and initiatives to enter new labour markets, such as the Middle East, North America, Australia, Eastern Europe (Binh, 2010).

Adjustments to the minimum wage represent another work-related measure used in response to shocks. In response to the 2008/2009 economic crisis, Kenya was one of several countries to increase the minimum wage in real terms, which was linked to the rise in commodity prices up to May 2008 (ILO and World Bank, 2012). In Viet Nam, in an effort to support workers' incomes in the face of high inflation, the

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government worked out a roadmap to gradually increase the minimum wage. The roadmap was consistently implemented during the crisis period and, between 2007 and 2010 the minimum wage was increased three times (Binh, 2010).

Reduced working hours and work sharing is an instrument used to protect jobs and limit the permanent dismissal of workers in the aftermath of a shock. In Viet Nam, the government adopted a policy which encouraged enterprises not to lay off workers but to reduce working time and overtime shifts instead. Research carried out in the Thang Long Industrial Park on the outskirts of Hanoi shows that managers were keen to retain trained or skilled workers to avoid incurring the significant costs that would be involved in re-recruiting and retraining workers when demand picked up. Most workers were working on a reduced schedule, often around 70 percent of their normal hours (ASEAN, 2010).

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# 4 Social protection delivery

In response to a covariate shock, social protection needs to be delivered quickly and at an adequate scale in terms of the high number of people negatively affected and in need of support. Programme implementation and delivery details determine the extent to which this is possible. The rules regulating existing social protection policy in non-crisis times may pose a challenge to rapid scale-up. Furthermore, everyday infrastructure and administrative limitations may be further exacerbated by the shock. Failure to rely on existing social protection policies in response to a shock in some of the cases studied here was the result of the administrative complexity and weak flexibility of existing instruments in place. In Viet Nam, for instance, one of the reasons for the adoption of new anti-poverty targeted interventions in the aftermath of the 2009 economic crisis was the administrative complexity and rigidity of existing social safety net instruments (World Bank, 2010a). Two implementation stages are especially critical to social protection implementation and are examined in this section: targeting and delivery.

## 4.1 Targeting

Social protection programme targeting varies depending on population coverage, informational requirements, including the type of information used and the frequency of eligibility testing or recertification, and methods used for beneficiary identification and selection. Programmes may be designed to reach broad or limited segments of the population at wide or of the poor population. The information used to target resources may be at the level of individuals, households, administrative units or geographic. It varies depending on the source (household surveys, administrative data, early warning systems etc.) and on the frequency with which it is available and the extent and speed with which it captures changes in people's circumstances. Finally, the methods used to identify and select beneficiaries vary and include simple means-testing and proxy means-testing (PMT) typically using household survey data, community-based beneficiary identification, area-based targeting and self-targeting. Such approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive and are used in combination in some programmes.

One of the striking features of the case study countries is the low social protection coverage of the poor population prior to the shocks considered. Low social protection coverage inevitably limits the potential role for social protection in the event of a shock. In Bangladesh for example, social safety net coverage is estimated at less than 10% of the poorest quintile and is concentrated in rural areas (Grosh et al., 2011).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Another source suggests that 13% of the poor population of Bangladesh were reached by any form of safety net in 2008 (World Bank 2009b cited in Keats et al., 2011). Although targeting performance is good, low coverage is an issue. The key programmes used to respond to the food crisis are generally fairly well targeted to the poor (Grosh et al., 2011).

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Low coverage may be the result of limited financial resources. However, particular groups of individuals or areas of a country may also be excluded by design, in many cases depending on political interests and priorities. Such design issues jeopardise an effective social protection response. In Bangladesh for example, several commentators have observed that the low social protection coverage of vulnerable people unable to participate in labour-intensive public works programmes – such as children, the elderly, the disabled and the chronically ill – automatically limit the potential for social protection to support these groups in the event of a shock (Ahmed et al. 2010).

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In Kenya, according to Bailey (2013), political indifference to the dryland districts in the north is an important factor in explaining the region's vulnerability to drought and the delay in responding to early warnings of the 2011 emergency.<sup>8</sup> In Bangladesh, studies suggest that responses to the 'triple F' crisis, particularly in the immediate instance, concentrated on the urban population. External assistance to increase consumption was in some instances reportedly lower in rural than in urban areas. For example more than a quarter of poor urban labourers surveyed by Sulaiman, Parveen, and Das (2009) reported benefiting from subsidised sales of food by the government, compared to only a couple of per cent of households in the poorest rural quintile.<sup>9</sup> According to another study of open market sales of subsidised rice, participants in focus groups thought that subsidised sales were not attempted on a large enough scale outside the capital, particularly in rural areas (Wiggins et al. 2010 cited in Keats et al., 2011). This may have been at least partly driven by political factors, such as the extent of public concern and protest over shocks. Since most of the protests and riots over food prices in 2008 took place in cities, it is not surprising that most governments tended to focus on measures to mitigate price increases or their impacts in urban areas.

Beyond political priorities and considerations underlying targeting decisions, technical elements of targeting procedures also facilitate adequate responsiveness in the event of a shock.

A critical component to effective targeting is the establishment of a unique ID system. The absence of a unique identifier in many countries is an obstacle for people to demand and access services including social protection. In the case study countries, efforts to expand social protection in the aftermath of a shock have been accompanied by initiatives to extend the provision and coverage of ID systems. An example is provided by Pakistan, where the possession of a national biometric ID card was a precondition for registration for the 2010 large-scale flood responses. The government agency responsible for registration, NADRA (National Database

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<sup>8</sup> However, this might now be changing as the political importance of the region has increased in recent years (oil) (Bailey, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> While agricultural projects dedicated to increasing food production were directed largely at rural areas, due to the highly skewed land ownership in many areas, and the fact that many rural people do not earn their main living from food production, this may not have had a very broad effect on rural food insecurity — see e.g. concerns raised by Save the Children UK (2009) in rural Bangladesh (cited in Compton et al., 2010).

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and Registration Authority), rapidly rolled out biometric screening equipment across all Watan – large scale cash relief programme - card registration centres and issued over 400,000 new cards to the flood affected, free of charge. A rapid evaluation found that few people were excluded from the programme due to their not possessing a valid ID (Smith et al., 2012).

Different targeting approaches may be more suitable for different types of shocks. For example, geographic areas that are repeatedly hit by shocks can be identified and reached through geographic targeting. The evolution of safety nets in Bangladesh with a sharper focus on targeting geographical poverty pockets, such as the monga in the north-west of the country, the haors (wetlands) in the north-east and, more recently, the coastal belt, reflects this recognition (Sabina, 2012).

The reliance on community-based targeting can help ensure that precious information detained by local authorities is used to inform beneficiary selection. At the same time, it can leave processes vulnerable to local power politics and the misuse of local discretion. Like other targeting approaches, its effectiveness in the aftermath of a shock depends to a large extent on whether mechanisms were in place and institutionalised prior to the crisis or set up in the crisis context.

In Pakistan, the cash transfer response package to the 2005 earthquake relied on community targeting to provide cash transfers to approximately 270,000 households and reach about 36 percent of affected households using a range of household information (Heltberg, 2007). Relief Committees were established to tour villages and adjudicate compensation claims. While they were supposed to visit every household, in some cases, village meetings were convened and assessments were conducted based on oral evidence (Pelham et al, 2011). Moreover, the process was assessed to be lengthy. Pelham et al. (2011) report Save the Children estimates that the preparation phase for community-based targeting in general can take up to fourteen weeks and concluded that while this may be possible if scaling up a safety net and targeting process that is already in place, “it is infeasible if trying to implement a safety net rapidly from scratch” (Pelham et al., 2011).

These challenges can be at least partly avoided when programmes are already in place. In the Bangladesh Vulnerable Group Feeding programme, the lowest tier of the government administration (Union Council further divided into nine Wards which are represented by elected male and nominated female public representatives) have information and maintain lists of vulnerable households based on guidelines and set criteria for identifying most vulnerable and destitute families. When needed, they undertake rapid assessments and suggest names of the affected households to the higher authority. Local important persons like School Teacher, Social worker, NGO representative are also consulted. Although the speed of response in these cases of existing mechanisms may be better, another potential shortcoming of community-level targeting, local discretion and the influences of local power politics in determining eligibility, remains an issue. For this programme, there are concerns that there is no neutral system of selecting the beneficiaries and leakage remains the biggest challenge.

The information considered to determine eligibility also matters to the degree to which a programme can be shock responsive. Targeting of social protection is commonly designed around variables that capture long-term, chronic poverty. This generates a tension with the objective of reaching households that are affected by a shock and that may not be social protection beneficiaries. The issue of “static” targeting, whereby the information used to target does not reflect rapid changes in

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people's living standards, depends on the variables considered in the targeting process and the frequency with which data on such variables is available.

The reliance of social assistance programmes on PMTs that are not a simple means-test that immediately captures changes in people's circumstances is a case in point. In Bangladesh, one of the challenges to effective shock response is related to the reliance of key programmes on PMTs with an eligibility threshold which is not a simple estimate of purchasing power and so is not straightforward to adjust to keep a steady value in the face of food price volatility (Grosh et al, 2011).

The "static" nature of targeting is also reinforced by the reliance on data that are collected over long intervals of time. For instance, the reliance on data from large-scale household surveys that are implemented with a frequency of one or more years, limits the possibility for a targeting mechanisms to capture rapid and possibly short-term changes in people's circumstances. Where targeting relies on information collected through administrative registries especially designed for social protection programme management, the rules regulating claimant registration matter to the potential for programmes to respond to a shock and changes in demand for support. This is facilitated most in programmes with an ongoing or rolling programme registration and limited when registration is limited to particular times or intervals. In Vietnam, slow screening procedures for social assistance policies, whereby lists of the poor are re-established only when a new poverty line is issued, usually every 5 years, is an obstacle to expanding coverage to the "new poor" (Castel, 2010).

The frequency with which administrative records are updated matters, so does their coverage. More specifically, if administrative records are restricted to collecting information on existing social protection beneficiaries, their use in identifying potential new ones in the aftermath of a shock is limited. In contrast, registries that regularly collect information for a broader segment of the population, including the 'near poor' and other vulnerable groups in addition to programme beneficiaries, are a powerful tool for social protection shock response.

In Kenya, one of the HSNP's advantages with respect to potential scale-up in coverage is that all households in the four districts targeted by the programme have been registered and their poverty rankings recorded. Although only around one-quarter of those for which records exist currently receive the cash transfer, in the event of a humanitarian emergency, this information is readily available for emergency programming (Slater and Bhuvanendra, 2013). Similarly, in Viet Nam, the MOLISA poverty list records information on households whose income falls below the poverty line, according to a combination of surveys and community discussions and on the basis of an official poverty line, and can be used to scale-up coverage to households that are not current social protection beneficiaries (ASEAN, 2010). This poverty list served as the basis for identifying the beneficiaries for the 2009 Tet one-off cash transfer, introduced as an anti-crisis measure. Since then, discussions on how to strengthen Viet Nam's SSN shock responsiveness have focused on the possibility of combining the annual update of the poor list with the opportunity for households to apply to the poor list on a rolling, ongoing, basis to allow the list to capture those that have newly fallen into poverty (World Bank, 2010b).

Early warning systems (EWS) are another source of information that is crucial to timely and effective social protection response, specifically in the case of events associated with extreme weather and climate change. When used appropriately, they can be a powerful instrument. In Kenya for example, Concern launched the early scale-up of nutrition interventions in the Moyale district when the Famine

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Early Warning System Network (FEWSNET) indicated that the district was at risk of becoming ‘highly food insecure’, by recruiting and training health workers, supporting the Ministry of Health to open new health facilities, distributing water purification tablets and supporting a food voucher scheme for 3,000 poor households. Between December 2010 and July 2011, the rate of severe malnutrition fell in Moyale from 3% to 1.5%, whereas it increased dramatically in neighbouring districts (Concern, 2013).

Although the availability of timely information is central to the effective targeting of social protection in the aftermath of a shock, it is not sufficient. The adequate use of information is also important and critically depends on the detailed advance planning and coordination of the use of different information sources by actors involved in both data collection/generation and policy delivery. One of the reasons mentioned by analysts for the timely response to cyclone Sidr in Bangladesh is the strong coordination and linkages between national and local level actors and sources of information (Pelham et al., 2011). Early warning systems in place under the overall system of disaster preparedness lead by the Ministry of Disaster Management, alongside information drawn from the Ministry’s disaster management officers at sub-district, Upazila, level, helped ensure that the emergency response came into action as soon as the storm warning for the cyclone was issued. Resources were available without the need to launch an appeal and potential victims started receiving support even prior to the event (Pelham et al., 2011).

In other cases, despite plans outlining procedures and responsibilities to ensure information flow and use, some commentators point at how the weak coordination across EWS efforts hampers timely shock response. For example, in Kenya, by design the EWS aims to ensure a smooth exchange and use of information. However, assessments point to weak coordination across different partners involved in early warning. Wheeler (2001) for example outlines Kenya’s early warning system in the food security sector. By design, the national level EWS is led by the Kenya Food Security Meeting, with representatives from over 50 different organisations, including USAID’s Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWSNET), and the Kenya Food Security Steering Group (KFSSG), made up of representatives from the Government, the UN, NGOs and donors. The food security sector uses drought early warning information at community level, linked to information from national meteorological stations. Geographical Review Teams (GRTs) ensure that up-to-date early warning and food security status monitoring data and reports covering the entire country are available to the KFSSG on a monthly basis (Wheeler, 2001).<sup>10</sup> While Kenya’s EWS capacity is rated 4/5 by Bailey (2013), he has argued that the partnership on EWS has “proved ineffective and essentially been circumvented by a parallel system operated by agencies and donors”. This assessment is echoed by Anangwe (2012) who observes that in Kenya, disaster risk reduction agencies lack synergies with prediction and early warning partners such as the Kenya Red Cross Society and FEWSNET Regional Office, which are not currently closely linked to the national DRR institutions.

## 4.2 Delivery

In the context of a shock, two issues in particular determine the capacity of social protection delivery mechanisms to respond quickly and adequately: the degree of coordination among actors involved or regulation of institutional response, and the delivery modality.

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<sup>10</sup> There are five GRTs that cover different administrative livelihood zones - northwestern pastoral, northeastern pastoral, agro-pastoral, marginal agricultural and high-potential/dairy districts - across the country.

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### **Coordination and regulation of responsibilities among different actors**

Weak coordination among actors involved in social protection delivery is a key obstacle to effective shock response. This can arise from weak planning and regulation of the institutional responsibilities and arrangements in the event of a shock and the absence of a coordinating body. For example, in Pakistan, in response to the 2008 ‘triple F’ crisis, Ahmed (2008) notes that the lack of a central strategic body which coordinates the wide range of safety net programmes currently in place is “a serious weakness given large unmet needs and finite resources” (Ahmed, 2008).

The elaboration of plans allocating clear responsibilities to different actors to be adopted in crisis circumstances and the establishment of a central coordinator and shock response monitoring unit are initiatives that have been adopted to address these shortcomings. In Bangladesh, during the 2009 food and financial crisis, the government set up two taskforces made up of government officials, and announced a national taskforce, with the finance minister as convenor, to monitor the impact of the crisis on various sectors of the economy (Rahman et al., 2009; te Velde, 2009; te Velde et al., 2010).

In the aftermath of the 2010 floods in Pakistan, the proliferation of cash-based responses raised the issue of the coordination of such interventions.<sup>11</sup> The establishment of the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP)<sup>12</sup> was central to ensuring improved coordination across programmes. With the objective of strengthening the coordination and harmonisation of programming between agencies using cash-based assistance, as well as facilitating communication with the broader humanitarian coordination system, CaLP created tools such as an online communication platform and an email discussion group and developed an information matrix detailing different agencies’ roles and responsibilities in delivering cash transfers. It also focused on strengthening the technical capacity of humanitarian personnel to implement cash transfer programming in ways appropriate to the local context through training courses (CaLP Pakistan Country Profile; Palmaera, 2011).

### **Delivery modality**

Developments in the delivery of social protection in the event of a covariate shock include the increasing reliance on new information technologies. Improvements in ICT tools and systems are proving especially promising in addressing some of the challenges encountered in social protection delivery in the context of shocks including high financial costs and infrastructure challenges faced in more traditional (e.g. manual) transfer systems.

In the area of benefit payments, the use of smart cards, mobile phones and electronic payment systems is increasingly being introduced in programmes across the four country case studies. In Vietnam, as a result of reports on the low efficiency and effectiveness of existing manual delivery mechanisms, the government is piloting electronic payment systems and alternative arrangements to manual delivery through the post office and local banks are being explored to improve social assistance payment delivery. Monthly social assistance benefit payments made by local officials and requiring multiple trips for both beneficiaries and officers in charge of payments led to delivery problems, particularly in remote and lower capacity areas. Commentators have argued that moving away from a

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<sup>11</sup> Harvey and Bailey (2011) note that coordinating cash-based responses can be problematic because cash cuts across sectors and programmes and can have multiple objectives which make it difficult to fit cash neatly within existing coordination structures.

<sup>12</sup> CaLP is the Cash Learning Partnership of Oxfam GB, Save the Children, the British Red Cross, Action Against Hunger/ACF international and the Norwegian Refugee Council.

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manual payment system could increase transparency and accountability and reduce errors and costs. It could also free up processing time of local officials currently involved in the delivery of cash benefits, increasing their ability to concentrate on other service delivery functions such as communication and outreach to beneficiaries (World Bank, 2010b).

In Pakistan, the reliance on pre-paid Visa debit cards in the Watan card programme in response to the floods helped to facilitate the rapid response to the flood disaster. The government partnered with a private bank, UBL, to implement the delivery of cash to beneficiaries via the debit cards. This was particularly challenging in the context of a mainly rural population in a country where only 12 percent of the population had access to formal banking facilities. According to Smith et al (2012), whilst there were understandably difficulties in deploying a system so new to people, rapidly and at such a large scale, the platform was able to deliver payments “relatively effectively and securely”. In fact, the speed at which the Pakistan Watan card flood response was scaled up in a matter of weeks is reported as “a testament that the system worked well” (Smith et al., 2012). It took the government less than two months to identify and implement the delivery of cash to recipients (Harvey et al., 2010). Stakeholders with experience of the Watan card programme explained that these achievements would not have been feasible with manual approaches (Smith et al., 2012).

Two critical elements to the success of the Watan cards initiative were the government’s strong partnership with the private bank and the use of pre-existing payment agent networks (the Visa system is an internationally recognised standard). UBL considered the substantial initial investment worthwhile in view of the potential longer term benefits. Furthermore, bank partners, regulators and vendors were familiar with Visa, which reduced set-up time (Smith et al., 2012).

Despite the relative success and effectiveness of the reliance on this system for benefit payment in Pakistan, some challenges emerged. The system relies on the existence of sufficient cash-out points through a developed and functioning banking agent network and sufficient vendors with point of sale (POS). Agent coverage of the Watan card programme in Pakistan was much sparser in remote rural areas, increasing the transaction cost to the recipient in these areas, although transferring cash manually would have led to even longer waiting times (Smith et al., 2012). In addition to the number of agents and their proximity to beneficiaries, the effectiveness of technology to transfer cash depends on the liquidity in beneficiary area. Whilst proximity to an agent is required in order for a recipient to access cash, the liquidity within the branchless banking platform as a whole is based on the cash stock of the agents rather than simply the number of agents. In more remote areas this is a product of how well the agents are supported with liquidity by the service provider” (Smith et al., 2012).

In Kenya, the HSNP uses an innovative payment mechanism, using biometric smart cards and POS devices to enable beneficiaries to access cash at various local shops. In this case too, the objective is to ensure that the payments are accessible despite the remoteness of much of the region covered by the programme, as well as the high mobility of beneficiaries. Recipients have their fingerprints scanned and take their smart card to a local trader or agent, who uses a POS device to verify their identities. Over 40,000 households affected by the 2011 drought crisis in northern Kenya have been registered for a branchless bank account and smart card with Equity Bank, enabling them to receive cash transfers through the same e-payment system used by the HSNP that operates in the same districts (Smith et al., 2011). This electronic payment system has proved to facilitate scale-up in terms of increasing the frequency or amount of payments to existing recipients. Whether this

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is possible depends critically on whether the key infrastructure is in place, including bank branches, post offices and trader shops, as well as the ability to communicate with recipients, which may be difficult if roads or telecommunications infrastructure are damaged (Harvey et al, 2010).

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# 5 Social protection financing

In the aftermath of a shock, social protection financing encounters major challenges as government revenues typically contract – as tax revenues and social security contributions decline – while the demand for support increases. In all four countries examined here, public spending on social protection increased in the aftermath of recent shocks, including the food and financial crisis. However, in some cases, this increase was part of a broader increase in social spending, as was the case in Bangladesh and Viet Nam, which adopted fiscal stimulus packages. In Pakistan, the decision that the country lacked room for expansionary fiscal policy was accompanied by social spending cuts and an increase in the budget allocation for social transfer programmes (ILO, 2009).

In Bangladesh, in the wake of the sharp increases in the prices of food grains during 2007-08 and of related disasters, the introduction of new programmes and the expansion of existing programmes, led to an increase in the budget share of expenditure allocated to social protection, from 3.5 to 6.8% of total government expenditure in 2008 (Islam et al., 2011; te Velde, 2009). The share of Bangladesh's fiscal stimulus package devoted to social protection was 12.8% in 2008/9 (Bauer et al., 2009; Zhang et al., 2010).

In Kenya, spending on safety nets almost doubled, between 2005 and 2010, mainly in response to the 2008 drought and the rapid increase in spending on cash transfer programmes from 2009. Spending on the General Food Distribution (GFD) programme accounts for a large share of SSN spending: 53.2% of all safety net spending between 2005 and 2010 (GoK, 2012). The Government of Kenya is the largest source of financing to social protection (55%), followed by development partners (22%) and members of contributory schemes (22%). Plans to develop Kenya's National Safety Net Programme (NSNP) include budget increases between 2014 and 2017 and targets for government spending on the NSNP are 41% for 2014, increasing yearly to 79% by 2017 (World Bank, 2013a).

Viet Nam initially introduced a stabilisation policy package in 2008, combining tight monetary policy with a reduction in government expenditure. In 2009, the government adopted a policy shift from fiscal restraint to fiscal stimulus. The stimulus package accounted for about 8.3 per cent of GDP, around 16 per cent of which went to social protection programmes, including a one-off targeted cash transfer to the poor during the Tet New Year holiday, a new regionally targeted programme for the poorest districts and a new programme providing housing support for poor families (ASEAN/World Bank, 2010). While the stimulus package successfully addressed some of the issues triggered by the crisis, such as income vulnerability of individuals and rising unemployment, it contributed to an increased budget deficit and rising inflation (Binh, 2010).

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In Pakistan, large public sector spending cuts planned from 2008 onwards accompanied planned increases in social safety net spending.<sup>13</sup> In 2008, the Public Sector Development Plan for 2008/09 was revised down by 41% and education and health allocations by 29% and 25%, respectively. The main adjustment strategies used in Pakistan in response to the crisis included reducing subsidies, increasing consumption taxes, rationalising and targeting safety nets, labour reform (2010-2013) (Ortiz and Cummins 2013). The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), developed in 2008, was introduced in part to offset these impacts (Khawaja cited in Bauer and Thant, 2009). Spending on social protection increased from 0.3 per cent of GDP in 2008 to 0.9 per cent of GDP in 2009 (see “Pakistan Gets \$7.6 Billion Loan from IMF”, IMF Survey Online, 24 November 2008 cited in ILO, 2009) and is now close to 1.0 per cent (Grosh et al., 2011).

In all four countries, donor support has played an important role and has helped to ensure that funding was available in the aftermath of some shocks. In some cases, countries turned to donors for support in response to a shock as a result of a lack of domestic resources and alternatives. While donor funding has proved critical in providing needed support, dependence on donors can also lead to uncertainty and weak autonomy.

In Kenya, a high share (71%) of SSN funding comes from development partners (GoK, 2012). According to McCord (2009), the global financial crisis forced Kenya to look to the international community to underwrite existing social protection commitments. Prior to the crisis, the government had deliberately limited the extent of donor financing to maintain policy independence and financing security (McCord, 2009 and 2010). Dependence on donor funding took its toll with the closure of the World Bank-funded Arid Lands Resource Management Project (ALRMP) in 2010, said to have left Kenya without an important funding stream for early action when the 2011 drought came (Bailey, 2013).

Alongside obtaining adequate funds for social protection response, challenges to effective shock response include the timely availability of such resources. Recent initiatives aimed at tackling this issue include the establishment of contingency funds to ensure ready resource availability and the use of triggers for their timely release.

In Kenya, alongside the development of NSNP financing in the regular budget, the government has set up a multi-donor National Drought and Disaster Contingency Fund (NDDCF), established as a trust fund under the Ministry of Finance, to finance the scaling up of the NSNP in the event of a shock (World Bank, 2013a). Alongside the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA), established in late 2011 with a ten-year drought management strategy, the NDDCF will have an independent mandate and funding structure designed to facilitate a long-term vision of development in drought-prone areas and the capacity to intervene with contingency funding (Mosley, 2012). The plan is for the NDDCF to have two components: one that disburses funds for early response to drought and a second that disburses funds for quick action in the wake of rapid-onset disasters. The two components will have separate management arrangements, to separate these two distinct functions, but combining them in one body is judged to be a more cost-effective option that will avoid the proliferation of multiple institutions (Tilson, 2012). Rapid disbursement in the event of a shock is linked to the use of early warning indicators and triggers. When an agreed set of early warning indicators is triggered, the programme can use the contingency funds to provide cash transfers to

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<sup>13</sup> At the time of the food and financial crisis Pakistan lacked room for an expansionary fiscal policy. For example, reserves fell sharply in Pakistan (where they stood well below 10 per cent of GDP prior to the onset of the crisis), ultimately resulting in a US\$7.6 billion IMF loan to the country to shore up the financial market (ILO, 2009).

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populations affected by a shock. Initial efforts to build this capacity will focus on the HSNP, which operates in drought-prone areas, and is managed by the NDMA (World Bank, 2013b).

New initiatives to facilitate timely disbursement have also been adopted by donors. In Bangladesh, the 2007 floods promoted a change in DFID funding mechanisms to facilitate rapid response to “predictable” disasters. Two key changes were made. A pre-approved business case for quick release of funds for predictable emergencies in the DFID Bangladesh country office is in place for quick response and immediate release of funds. Under this arrangement, the country office does not have to complete a full business case in the event of an emergency; the main issues and indicative costs need to be provided. The second initiative involves a programme contingency fund built into DFID-funded CLP. The design of CLP-2 includes a £1million (annual) contingency budget built into the project designated for disaster relief response. If it is not spent within the year it has to be redistributed into regular programme activities. Interestingly, because the CLP has had a specific focus on reducing the vulnerability of poor households in the Chars to regular flooding (providing plinths to raise households, increasing knowledge on how to cope with floods etc.) the need for this contingency fund has reduced. CLP-2 is now using the contingency fund to include more beneficiaries into the last year of the programme.

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# 6 Social protection planning and shock preparedness

One of the key factors to securing effective social protection shock response is to have programmes and systems in place in advance of a shock. Efforts to introduce and expand social assistance, social insurance and work-related social protection programmes where they are absent or limited are a crucial step towards ensuring more effective shock response. In some countries, these efforts are accompanied by the adoption of national social protection plans with the objective of enhancing coordination across policies or programmes and minimising fragmentation and overlaps. Another obstacle to adequate social protection shock response is the weak or absent coordination across sectors addressing risk management and shock response, including social protection, disaster risk reduction and humanitarian interventions. This section examines recent efforts to strengthen social protection and the coordination of interventions across sectors in the four case study countries.

## **Expansion of social protection programmes and development of national social protection systems**

The establishment of social protection programmes in the four case study countries has helped make them more prepared for shocks. For instance, there is general agreement in the literature that Pakistan is now in a better position to respond to crises because of existing national social protection programmes (Samson 2009, cited in Davies and McGregor, 2009). Policy developments that followed the recent ‘triple F’ crisis, such as the roll out of the BISP in 2008/9, have additionally strengthened Pakistan’s shock preparedness (Grosh et al., 2011).

At the same time, in the countries studied here, coverage and benefit levels remain low. Furthermore, the institutional set-ups and administrative and technical capacity for shock response in many instances remain inadequate and weak. Poor coordination across organisations involved in the design and implementation of social protection, for example, remains a key challenge.

Weak or no reliance on existing programmes and poor coordination are illustrated in the cases of shock response in Bangladesh in Pakistan. In Bangladesh, 2007 cyclone relief efforts were complicated by the reluctance of donors and NGOs to support the national SSN response. Instead many did their own assessments and organised parallel response programs creating a complex confusing post-cyclone relief and rehabilitation effort. This was difficult to coordinate and made public financial management of funding more difficult (Sabina, 2012). In Pakistan, in the aftermath of the earthquake, the lack of coordination of interventions with existing safety nets was striking. In particular, several state-led cash transfer mechanisms were in place at the time of the earthquake, including Zakat and the Bait-ul-Mall, which support the poorest with food purchases and a subsidized wheat scheme administered through local committees. However, the national cash transfer agency,

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the Baitul-Mal, was not used to deliver the emergency cash responses and it is not clear why they did not draw on these existing mechanisms (Pelham et al., 2011).

Grosh et al.'s (2011) assessment of Pakistan's safety net, while recognising the positive developments and establishment of programmes on which to build on, flags both the less than full coverage of existing policies and need for administrative improvements. A key challenge is the limitation of an effective system in which future shock responses can be facilitated. In the case of safety net programmes, responses in the form of cash transfers have operated in distinct spheres. Recent initiatives to address this and promote long-term reform and system-building, with support from the World Bank, include the establishment of a national targeting system; efforts to enhance other areas of SSN operation and management, such as communications strategy, beneficiary outreach; and analytical work to assess and advise on the design parameters of SSN programmes (IEG, 2012; Grosh et al., 2011).

In Kenya, recent efforts to consolidate existing programmes with the objective of improving coordination, increasing coverage and effective crisis response, include the integration of five SSN cash transfer programmes (Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children, the Older Persons Cash Transfer, the Persons with Severe Disability Cash Transfer, the Urban Food Subsidy Cash Transfer and the HSNP), into a single National Safety Net Programme (as of July 2013). This reform includes the planned expansion of transfers to 3.3 million people (from 1.6 million people) by 2017. This expansion in coverage is accompanied by the establishment of a single registry of all beneficiaries (World Bank, 2013a). In addition to improving coordination and coverage, the introduction of the NSNP is designed to establish strong links with the National Drought Authority and National Contingency Fund to ensure that contingency funds can be mobilised quickly in the event of a shock (Government of Kenya, 2012).

The absence of a national overarching social protection strategy has been identified as one of the key shortcomings of social protection response in Bangladesh. Despite the existence of a large number of social safety-net programmes, these are largely fragmented in nature and administered by several ministries without effective coordination which leads to inefficient use of resources and sub-optimal generation of benefits (Islam et al., 2011). (Until now) Bangladesh has lacked a national strategy on social protection. Most social protection programmes are run by different government departments, NGOs, and international bilateral and multilateral partners, with little coordination between them, with 97% of annual allocations being spent through 30 major programmes (Sabina, 2012). Plans are currently underway to develop a comprehensive national social protection strategy (see e.g. UNDP and Government of Bangladesh in developing a national social protection strategy).

In addition to improving coordination through system planning, initiatives to expand social protection instruments where they are weak or absent can help ensure that countries are better prepared to face new shocks. In Kenya, recent reforms address some of the weaknesses of social insurance schemes and expand their coverage to the informal sector. The historically low coverage rates of the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) for example, – it covers formal sector workers who constitute 8% of the labour force – are being addressed via outreach initiatives to the informal sector, including efforts to enhance people's confidence in the Fund and the establishment of flexible voluntary saving schemes (Government of Kenya, 2012). In the area of health insurance, persistently low contribution rates to the National Hospital Insurance Fund, have led the government to launch the National

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Social Health Insurance Fund in 2012, with the aim of enrolling 60-80% of the population (Centre for Health Market innovations website, 2013).

Efforts to expand social insurance in Viet Nam, guided by the objective of achieving universal health insurance coverage by 2015, have led to rapidly rising coverage: from 11.3 million people in 2001 to about 37 million in early 2008. Its pension insurance system, based on a pay-as-you-go system supported by the current contributions of workers, has also been growing, its coverage rising from 4.2 million participants in 2000 to 7.4 million in 2007 (with a 10 percent growth rate between 2006 and 2007 alone) (ASEAN, 2010). In addition, Viet Nam introduced a contributions-based unemployment insurance system in 2009, designed to cover workers who have been formally employed for a minimum of 12 months. Given that recent figures point to the persistence of high informality - 38.7 percent of wage employment and 16.1 percent of total employment was in the formal sector as of 2006 – the capacity for this unemployment insurance scheme to provide income support in the event of loss of employment is likely to be modest for some time and until higher formality and social insurance coverage is achieved (ASEAN, 2010).

#### **Promoting coordination across social protection, risk management and crisis/disaster response**

Another obstacle to effective social protection shock response lies in the weak coordination across different sectors operating in risk management and humanitarian or emergency responses. In Kenya, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) argues that breaking the cycle of chronic vulnerability to droughts and other crises depends critically on improved linking together of the humanitarian and development aims. Too often humanitarian and development goals are addressed separately and there has been a greater focus on humanitarian relief operations and less on more durable development programmes (Paul, 2012). The IASC evaluation of the 2011 drought concluded that “developmental programming continues to be designed without scalability for humanitarian response being incorporated therein, while humanitarian responses too often do not factor in more sustainable developmental practices”. While some humanitarian programmes have developmental components and some developmental programmes incorporate humanitarian response and scalability, examples of programmes imbedding humanitarian-developmental linkages are limited (Paul, 2012).

Recent developments suggest that efforts are being made to strengthen integration and coordination across sectors. According to the UN Kenya Emergency Humanitarian Response Plan 2013, the overall strategy for humanitarian programming is to transition out of humanitarian aid. It aims to reduce the GFD over time, and integrate emergency responses into early and extended recovery plans and safety nets, such as the HSNP (UN, 2013a). According to the UN (2013b), there is a growing engagement in and support for disaster risk reduction and resilience-building activities as a preferable alternative to the on-going cycle of emergency relief. Particularly as the humanitarian situation in Kenya’s ASAL areas continues to improve, the focus on resilience has also advanced (UN, 2013b).

In Pakistan too, whilst the emergency or humanitarian response and the longer-term development safety nets have operated in distinct spheres, recent developments suggest that there are now growing synergies between development safety nets and disaster responses. An example is provided by the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), implemented as a response to a shock (the 2008 global food and financial crisis) and established as a long-term social protection programme. Key elements within the Pakistan system that have been used (or are hoping to be

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strengthened) in this programme, have also been used to help implement response to the disaster and conflict-related shocks, leading to increasing linkages between development safety nets and disaster responses emerging. These include the national identification system and the banking system.

In Pakistan, this trend can also be observed in the transition of the humanitarian efforts in response to the 2010 floods out of the relief phase and into a longer-term recovery phase. For example, the coordination activities of the CaLP have been transferred to national agencies with the objective of promoting continuity and sustainability of such functions (CaLP Pakistan Country Profile).

In Bangladesh, the response system that was in place when cyclone Sidr hit in 2007 – and which built on the experience of past disasters such as the 1998 and 2004 river floods – provides an example of an integrated plan across sectors and of how safety nets can be part of a country's disaster management plan. When the cyclone hit the mainland in November 2007, the National Disaster Management Strategy, which was primarily intended as a national response to river floods, meant that authorities could tap into existing risk management plans. The EWS triggered the safety nets which began distributing cash, rice and house-building grants, even before the main impact of the cyclone was felt. While, according to (Pelham et al, 2011) results were by no means adequate – there were still a tragic number of deaths, cyclone shelters were of a sub-optimum standard, and NGOs concentrated even in the post-relief phase, on in-kind relief – the assistance provided and the mass evacuation and re-accommodation of 4.5 million citizens within five days were a notable achievement (Pelham et al., 2011).

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# 7 Conclusion

This paper has reviewed the experience of four countries that are highly vulnerable to a range of covariate shocks and that have adopted and implemented a host of social protection policy adjustments and reforms in the aftermath of shocks: Bangladesh, Kenya, Pakistan and Viet Nam. Their experience highlights the main obstacles to timely, adaptive and adequate shock response, the social protection policy adjustment options available and the tensions and trade-offs associated with alternative policy instruments and reforms. It has also provided examples of the ways in which financing arrangements can incorporate elements of flexibility to facilitate timely response and of efforts to strengthen the coordination across different sectors working in risk management and emergency response. A summary of the main findings and policy implications follows.

## **Social protection instruments: design reforms and adjustments**

The four countries have relied on a wide range of instruments in the event of a shock, including social assistance, social insurance and work-related programmes. In social assistance, the objective of reaching new beneficiaries, individuals or households affected by a shock, can be achieved by introducing new programmes and expanding existing ones. Reforms of this kind were adopted by all countries examined. While the expansion of existing and well-established programmes typically facilitates rapid and effective response – and underscores the importance of having such programmes in place in advance of a shock - new programmes set up in response to shocks have also in some cases developed into longer-term, institutionalised programmes, indicating that shocks may act as important triggers for social protection development. The ability to scale-up existing social assistance programmes in an adequate time frame critically depends on the targeting and delivery mechanisms adopted – more on this below.

Additional support to existing social protection beneficiaries can be scaled-up through upward revisions of benefit values and in-kind transfer amounts. Such adjustments can be implemented quickly in response to a shock. The main downside is that they reach existing programme participants and do not directly affect those that may have fallen into poverty or are adversely affected by the crisis and entitled to social protection support. Where adjustments to values or amounts are made, a critical issue concerns scale. In several programmes in the countries reviewed, benefit and transfer levels were too low to provide adequate support in the aftermath of a shock. Even when adjustments were made, in some cases, these were inadequate with respect to price increases and increasing needs.

Social insurance programmes can be a powerful instrument which incorporates elements of automation for shock response. Low coverage and benefit levels in the countries examined here limit the potential for support in the aftermath of a shock. High informality rates pose a challenge to the expansion of coverage. However, where such programmes exist, adjustments made in the aftermath of a shock can help support affected households and buffer shock effects. Examples include the relaxation of social insurance programme participation requirements. In Viet Nam

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for instance, government interest-free loans to enterprises were set up to support social insurance payments in the aftermath of the ‘triple F’ crisis.

Public work schemes were set up in the aftermath of shocks in all four countries with the objective of providing income to the poorest and able to work. Wage-setting rules present a challenge when salaries are so low as to be ineffective in terms of providing support and preventing negative coping strategies, a concern raised in several programmes. Failure to ensure wage rises in line with inflation also limits the potential effectiveness of such programmes. Adjustments to the minimum wage in both Kenya and Viet Nam proved effective in supporting incomes of workers. Finally, the reliance on reduced working hours and work sharing in Viet Nam was welcomed by both employers and employees.

### **Social protection targeting and delivery**

Reaching households or areas that have been negatively affected by a shock and that were not welfare recipients in advance of the shock is one of the critical challenges to social protection targeting systems. Administrative registries and other data sources with broad coverage, that provide information on vulnerable groups beyond narrow poverty lists and existing social protection beneficiaries are a powerful tool in facilitating policy scale-up, as the example of Kenya’s HSNP illustrates. The reliance on proxy-means tests that capture long-term poverty and do not immediately reflect changes in people’s circumstances, poses a challenge to timely and adequate social protection shock response, as illustrated by SSN programmes in Bangladesh. Similarly, the reliance on data sources that are updated with long time lags are an obstacle to expanding coverage to the new poor in a timely fashion, as shown in the case of social assistance programmes in Viet Nam.

In addition to adequate information for the targeting of social protection resources, the timely delivery of social protection in the aftermath of a shock requires strong coordination of the actors involved. The modality of delivery also matters and recent developments in the use of new information technology has helped overcome some of the challenges associated with timely delivery in the aftermath of a shock. In the aftermath of the ‘Triple F’ crisis, in Pakistan, the absence of a central body responsible for the coordination of the range of existing SSN programmes was reported as one of the central challenges to effective social protection response. The establishment of a unit or taskforce especially set up to monitor shock effects and coordinate responses, as was the case in Bangladesh, may prove helpful.

The reliance on a combination of delivery mechanisms and on new information technologies has also proved promising. In the area of benefit payments for instance, the reliance on smart cards, electronic and mobile phone payment systems has proved effective in delivering programmes in the aftermath of a shock across the countries examined in this paper. In Pakistan, the reliance on pre-paid debit cards for the delivery of cash transfers in the aftermath of the 2010 floods helped ensure that payments were delivered securely and in a timely fashion. In Kenya, the use of smart cards and an e-payment system in the delivery of the HSNP cash transfer facilitated the response to the 2011 drought crisis in the north. Critical elements that ensured the successful implementation of these instruments include strong partnerships with implementing agencies, including a private bank in the case of Pakistan’s Watan card, and the establishment of the relevant infrastructure in advance of the shock.

### **Social protection financing**

In all four countries, social protection spending increased in the aftermath of recent shocks. In most cases, this increase was accompanied by broader increases in social

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spending. In Pakistan, this increase took place in the context of significant cuts in social spending, with the objective of protecting the poorest. The main sources of social spending financing differ and matter. In Viet Nam, the 2009 fiscal stimulus package – around 16 per cent of which went to social protection programmes – contributed to an increased budget deficit. In Kenya, efforts to maintain social protection spending commitments in the aftermath of concurrent shocks in 2007-8 led the government to turn to the international community for support. While donor funding can provide precious resources in challenging times, donor dependence can also lead to uncertainty and weak continuity, as the case of Kenya illustrates.

The timely disbursement of resources for social protection is increasingly being secured through the establishment of contingency funds. In Kenya, the establishment of the National Drought and Disaster Contingency Fund, set up to finance the scaling up of the National Safety Net Programme in the event of a shock is one example. Donors are also adjusting their disbursement practices and relying on innovative instruments to help ensure rapid response, as illustrated by the case of Bangladesh.

#### **Social protection planning and shock preparedness**

Having social protection systems in place that can be adapted and expanded to accommodate greater needs and larger numbers of people in need is critical to effective shock response. Setting up new programmes and adopting new technologies for implementation after the onset of a shock can be difficult and limit a policy's effectiveness. Efforts to introduce and expand social protection where it has been largely absent or limited is a critical element to securing adequate shock response. In all four case study countries, social protection programmes have been introduced and expanded in recent years. Developments include the elaboration and adoption of national plans such as Kenya's NSNP and Bangladesh's National Social Protection Strategy, currently under preparation. In addition to supporting the extension of social protection, these aim to promote the coordination of social protection initiatives, another key element of effective shock response.

Finally, the strengthened coordination across sectors operating in social protection, risk management and humanitarian or emergency response holds some promise in promoting effective shock response. While these sectors continue to operate separately in most countries, and indeed pursue different objectives, where these meet and similar or the same tools are used, there is scope for enhanced coordination. Developments in all four countries provide examples of ways in which linkages across sectors are being strengthened, including for instance through the development of integrated shock response plans in Bangladesh and Kenya. Looking forward, as the frequency and intensity of a range of covariate shocks are likely to increase in all four countries, stronger collaboration and integration across sectors is an additional critical element to effective shock response.

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