

SEMINAR REPORT

‘Leaving no one behind through social protection’

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Abstract

The seminar 'Leaving no one behind through social protection', held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague on 29 October 2016, dealt with the question how social protection can be used to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Approximately 80 participants from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, NGOs and academic institutions attended the seminar, which revolved around the relationship between social protection and three key themes in Dutch development cooperation policy: food security, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and employability. Interactive discussions in parallel sessions resulted in an acknowledgement that social protection can stimulate food security, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and employability. Yet, this largely depends on the design and implementation of social protection, including its successful integration within existing policies, and the financial and political sustainability of programmes and policies. Other cross-cutting issues were the long-term cost-effectiveness of social protection and whether programmes should target specific groups or be universal. It was concluded that policymakers should consider the wide range of direct and indirect impacts that social protection can have to fully assess its potential for integration in development cooperation policies. As the impacts of social protection take time to materialize and are highly context-dependent, it is recommended to invest in social protection programmes that are based on long-term commitment.

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1. Introduction

“Social protection (SP) is not a hammock but a trampoline”, explained Reina Buijs, deputy director of International Development Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at a seminar on ‘Leaving no one behind through social protection’, held in The Hague on 29 September 2016. The seminar was co-hosted by the INCLUDE knowledge platform, UNICEF Netherlands, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In her introductory speech, Reina Buijs raised the main issues and questions to be discussed in this seminar. The context and implementation of SP interventions is complex, as is the design of programmes. Should they be universal or only target the poorest groups, and who should provide and finance them? Governments are, of course, often seen as responsible for social protection arrangements. But what are the possibilities for governments that are not as strong as we would like them to be? This is where effective international development cooperation can support government plans. For example, Dutch support for Ethiopia’s conditional social support to the poorest has made great strides. Another example is Dutch support to Mozambique’s SP programme, which was highlighted at the seminar.

The donor landscape is changing. There are new actors and new investments being made, and trade flows and remittances are becoming more important for development. This calls for another form of public engagement, which needs to be reflected in new forms of SP. The discussion during this seminar revolved around the added value of SP programmes to food security, sexual reproductive health and rights, and employability outcomes. The governance and sustainable financing of SP were discussed as well.

Table 1. Social protection as an umbrella concept within social policies

Social Policy			
<i>Basic service provision</i>	<i>Social protection</i>		
Education, health, housing, etc.	<i>Social insurance:</i> Contributory programmes addressing life cycle and employment contingencies	<i>Social assistance:</i> Tax financed programmes addressing poverty and vulnerability	<i>Labour market policy:</i> ‘Active’ and ‘passive’

Source: [Barrientos 2016](#)

1.1. Scope and objectives of the seminar

As outlined by Reijna Buijs at the start of the seminar, SP is increasingly being recognized as an important instrument for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and for international development cooperation in general. In times where equality and ‘leaving no one behind’ are important objectives, SP can be a powerful tool to reach the poorest of the poor. In paragraph 24,

the SDG agenda states that “All people must enjoy a basic standard of living, including through social protection systems”.¹

The foreign trade and development cooperation agenda of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs reflects this recognition of SP as an important instrument, particularly with a focus on safety nets such as agricultural insurances. The Netherlands supports the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in Ethiopia, set up by the World Food Programme, the Government of Ethiopia, and other international and national partners. It also provides funding for UNICEF’s cash transfer programmes in Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Building on the increased recognition of social protection as an important tool for inclusive economic development, UNICEF the Netherlands, INCLUDE and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are cooperating to identify the (positive and negative) impacts of social protection, ways to improve social protections programmes, and synergies with other policies in the four spearheads of Dutch development cooperation: food security, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), water, and security and rule of law.

It was decided to explore these opportunities in the form of two seminars, through which to share the most recent and policy-relevant evidence on the impacts of social protection, including under which conditions social protection is most effective. The first seminar on 23 June 2016, titled ‘*Cash transfer or safety net: which social protection programmes are inclusive and cost-effective?*’, compiled the most recent evidence on the impact of social protection from practitioners and academic research, including policy evaluations. Based on insights from Armando Barrientos (Global Development Institute), Paul Quarles van Ufford (UNICEF Zambia) and Nicholas Awortwi (INCLUDE), a convincing message emerged: social protection works, but should be well aligned with existing and new social policies.

Building on this message, this second seminar, ‘*Leaving no one behind through social protection*’, revolved around the question of how to make optimal use of SP programmes as complementary and integrated into existing (or new) development policies in the spearheads of Dutch development cooperation. Of the four spearheads, food security and SRHR were selected as the main themes for this seminar. Together with employability, which is one of the priorities in the Letter on Inclusive Development sent by Minister Lilianne Ploumen to the Dutch Parliament in September 2015, these two themes provided the context in which to explore social protection during the meeting. As outlined in the first seminar, key issues for successful implementation of social protection are setting up a sustainable system for financing for social protection and engaging with the right political stakeholders to establish and maintain social protection programmes over the long term.

1.2. Programme

The seminar was divided into two parts: the impacts of social protection and its linkages to thematic areas in the first part, and finance, stakeholder engagement and the role of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the second part. The first part consisted of three parallel thematic sessions on the relationship between social protection and food security, SRHR and employability. These sessions were preceded by short pitches by experts who presented the most relevant evidence on the linkages between social protection and the respective themes. The second part consisted of two

¹ United Nations (2015) *Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development*. New York: United Nations General Assembly.

thematic sessions on the sustainable finance and political dialogue of social protection, building on the conclusions drawn in the thematic sessions. This part was introduced by Mayke Huijbregts (UNICEF Mozambique), who gave a presentation on the sustainable political cooperation of cash transfer and public works programmes in Mozambique. This was followed by closing remarks and a discussion. The full programme can be found in Annex 1.

This report is structured around the sessions. The first section summarizes the three thematic sessions and provides a synthesis of the evidence available on the respective themes. The next section summarizes the discussion of the two governance sessions, based on the presentation on the governance of social protection in Mozambique. Some issues that recurred in both thematic and governance sessions are outlined in a separate section. The final section provides guidelines for how to use the lessons learnt in this seminar and how to move forward in finding better linkages between social protection and the three thematic areas.

2. Thematic discussions

2.1. Social protection & food security

In her pitch, Rachel Slater (Overseas Development Institute) pointed out that there is abundant evidence on the impacts of social protection on economic development. SP moves people out of poverty, increases food security and diet diversity, and has many other benefits that indirectly improve food security. Yet, according to Slater, this also puts a lot of pressure on SP, because it is often used to try to kill two birds with the same stone.

The session continued with a video presentation by Elisabeth Farmer (World Bank, Ethiopia), who is closely involved in the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in Ethiopia. According to her, the PSNP programme has had a large impact on food security, particularly as it reaches 8 million participants. The programme employs three methods:

- It provides productive and sustainable assets and improved access to social services through public works programmes that address the underlying causes of food insecurity (by providing income) and improve infrastructure (by constructing roads, irrigation systems, and health and education facilities).
- Through livelihoods activities, the programme provides beneficiaries with access to technical and financial services through literacy and business skills training, the promotion of savings, and mentoring, among other things.
- The programme provides timely, adequate and accessible transfers to households, including in case of shocks (e.g. drought), which means scaling up the programme in response to climate shocks to sustain the long-term impact of the interventions.

This PSNP has had a wide range of positive impacts, such as:

- Increase in vegetation cover and water retention, as well as reduced flooding
- Increase in the area of cropping land through public works
- Increase in crop yields through transfers, trainings and public works
- Increase in non-farm activities such as beekeeping, forage/fodder production, and firewood/pole production
- Decrease in the incidence of waterborne diseases
- Decrease in the average time to reach a primary school (by 50% of its pre-PSNP level)

Several questions were raised for discussion after this presentation:

- **What are the gender impacts of food security investments through safety nets?** This depends on whom the transfer is targeted to. The PSNP showed some positive impacts in terms of increased decision-making power for women and it established child care centres to allow women to engage in public works programmes.
- **Do public works participants receive training, equipment and supervision?** No, because public works activities do not require a high level of skill to participate. If these are needed, external people are hired.
- **Are the results in line with the budget for the PSNP?** The programme's value for money is relatively high compared to other programmes. Public works programmes are more effective, because they deal with structural mechanisms and apply an integrated approach. The achievements are close to the targets set by the World Bank in the design of the programme.

What does the evidence say?

The bulk of the research performed on the impacts of social protection confirms Rachel Slater's view, that there is abundant evidence confirming the positive impacts of social protection on economic development. The most important findings have been synthesized in a handout prepared for this seminar, which is available [here](#).

Social protection can improve food security by alleviating poverty and building resilience. A rise in income can result in an increase in own production, which, in turn, further increases income. With increased income, households can increase and diversify food consumption. Hence, the interrelationship between social protection, agricultural productivity and food security is widely acknowledged.

But, which types of social protection programmes are most effective: cash transfers (conditional and unconditional), in kind transfers (such as food aid), public works programmes, input subsidies, asset packages (including trainings), school feeding programmes, or price stabilization?

Cash transfers are the most common form of SP, but whether these should be conditional or unconditional is up for debate. *Conditional cash transfers* (CCTs) can be more effective, yet they are associated with high monitoring and administration costs and are, thus, difficult to implement on a large scale. However, CCTs can have a double dividend when the condition is that the recipients must use the transfers to purchase local services and products. Yet, as concluded by [Devereux \(2016\)](#): "Since conditionalities stimulate demand for social services, they should only be introduced if supply-side constraints are adequately addressed". Moreover, although conditionalities, such as enrolling children in schools, can have large indirect benefits, removing children from family farm labour can reduce food security in the short term ([McCord & Slater, 2009](#)).

Unconditional cash transfers (UCTs) can have direct and indirect effects on improving food security. Households participating in Ethiopia's Social Cash Transfer Pilot Programme (SCTPP) [experienced fewer problems](#) satisfying their alimentation needs (on average for a week per year less) and children are receiving 0.6 more meals a day. Through additional income generated by the [multiplier effect \(which was 2.0 in Malawi\)](#), cash transfers can also stimulate food security indirectly. The most important condition is that cash transfers are spent in local economies, and supply can increase with additional income. Otherwise, increased incomes can result in price increases through increased demand, thereby decreasing food security.

A conclusion that stands out from all evaluations, including the evaluation of the PSNP in Ethiopia, is that integrated approaches are the most effective. Apart from cash transfers, *asset packages* and *food transfers* show promise when part of an integrated programme. For instance, the [BRAC Chars Livelihood Programme](#) combines food or cash transfers with access to training and financial services. The [Food Security Programme in Ethiopia](#) found that households that participated in the PSNP public works and received a complementary package reduced their food insecurity by 1.5 months a year, compared to 0.6 months for households that participated in public works without the complementary package.

Direct food transfers can be efficient for alleviating hunger in the short term, but can also have long-term effects when procured from farmers in developing countries, such as in the World Bank's [Purchase for Progress project](#). Through such procurement, food aid can also stimulate food

production and remove any disincentive effects of aid imports. When this occurs in a structural manner, farmers can steadily increase production.

2.2. Social protection & SRHR

The SDGs aim to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by 2030. Goal 5 specifically mentions not leaving women and girls behind. There have been many gains in areas such as maternal health, HIV/AIDS, child marriage, female genital mutilation, teenage pregnancy, sexual exploitation and family planning, however, we are not there yet. So who are these girls and women left behind? And where does SP come in?

Poverty and social exclusion are both causes and consequences of sexual and reproductive health related issues like HIV, child marriage and sexual exploitation. It is important to break down the intergenerational cycle of girls and women missing out on services. If the exclusion of girls and women continues it will lead to more poverty and exclusion. SP can play an important role in tackling the poverty and exclusion of marginalized girls and women, as it addresses the social and economic drivers of reproductive ill-health.

But, should cash transfers be conditional to optimize their effectiveness in terms of sexual and reproductive health and rights outcomes? Should they only target a specific group, such as child brides or mothers living with HIV/AIDS, or include other vulnerable groups as well? These questions were also discussed and the experiences of several NGOs shared.

The Ugandan Ambassador shared a dilemma faced in achieving better SRHR outcomes from SP. Uganda has a high birth rate (6.2). This is the result of poverty and, until recently, a high infant mortality rate. As so many children (and parents) died as a consequence of AIDS, it was challenging for the government to implement policies for family planning. Now that the infant mortality rate has gone down, the Ugandan government has the opportunity to raise family planning issues. Another concern in Uganda is youth unemployment. The government tries to encourage youth to work in agriculture, however, most educated youth from the cities prefer to work in other areas. Taking this into consideration, the Ambassador recommended that social protection policies be closely linked to agriculture.

In the debate on the targeting of SP schemes in order to achieve better SRHR, it was noted that this might be unnecessary. The NGO Stop Aids Now shared its experiences with SP in the field. The organization works with people living with HIV and, therefore, its SP interventions are target at this specific group. However, there are other vulnerable people in the community who are not reached with SP, because they are out of sight. In the discussion, it was recommended that governments identify those vulnerable people who are being left out. Especially in the case of rural communities, it is essential that governments ensure that their policies actually touch the ground. In Ethiopia, SP is provided by both the government and NGOs: universal SP policies by the government are supplemented by targeted schemes by NGOs and civil society organizations.

It was argued that cash transfers should be given without conditions, because the ability to decide how the money is spent empowers the poor. PLAN shared their experiences from a project for SRHR with conditional cash transfers. In the project, women receive cards with credit that they can use for free services at a clinic. It was noted that this could be seen as a condition, but also as a way of

targeting vulnerable groups. Targeting vulnerable groups is conditional by definition, as their vulnerable state is the condition on which people from these groups receive help.

In a project by FLOW, women received an iPad and were trained as entrepreneurs, while at the same time receiving training in SRHR. The organization recognizes that it does not reach the most vulnerable groups. And, in some cases, this creates tension between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. The poor living in rural areas tend to be excluded from such programmes. Therefore, it is recommended that programmes use targeted cash transfers to reach these groups.

It is important that policymakers recognize the multiplier effects of cash transfers, especially when these are conditional. When cash transfers are linked to health and education, employability increases. Although there is much evidence that cash transfers work, many donor countries are reluctant to recognize their potential. However, it should be stressed that cash transfers are no longer donor driven. Rather, they are now provided by governments of many African countries, but these schemes need technical improvement to make them more effective. The role of donor countries is, thus, to assist governments in developing and implementing cash transfer policies.

The importance of ownership is being emphasized. In recent years governments have embraced the idea of SP through cash transfers. It is clear that SP should be a government-led process rather than donor driven. The role of donors should be to strengthen the system.

What does the evidence say?

Don't cash handouts to poor people create dependency instead of empowering them? And, will girls not spend the money on luxury items instead of investing in education? The evidence shows the opposite. Social transfers can address both income deficits in the short term and structural vulnerabilities and power hierarchies in the long term. Cash transfers serve as a preventative measure for many sexual risky behaviours. Girls who receive cash transfers are less likely to engage in transactional, cross-generational sex. SP also has the potential to remove the barriers for poor girls and women to attend antenatal visits and adhere to HIV treatment. Thereby, cash transfers can reduce violence among adults and adolescent girls, particularly intimate partner violence. Generally, there is an improvement in empowerment indicators, particularly in relation to women's choice to marry and engage in sexual activity, as well as fertility rates.

Should the cash transfer be conditional to be most effective for sexual reproductive health and rights outcomes? Should it only target a specific group (such as child brides or mothers living with HIV) or include other vulnerable groups as well? In SP programming, there is no one-size fits all. Pathways will differ according to country contexts, capacity and needs, and approaches need to be country led ([UNICEF and World Bank 2013](#)). The design of SP programmes needs to address both social and economic factors that may exclude marginalized girls and women from SRHR services and information. The conditionality of grants does not seem to be a crucial factor in their success. Unconditional cash grants generate the broadest range of benefits and offer maximum flexibility and respect for the autonomy of beneficiaries, in line with a rights-based approach to programming ([UNICEF Evaluation Office 2015](#)). Moreover, linking care services and messaging can influence positive outcomes.

For programmes to be most effective they should not be exclusively designed for a specific target group. Experiences with HIV and SP programmes for orphans and vulnerable children have taught us

that exclusive targeting stigmatizes beneficiaries and is costly; moreover, it can leave behind those who are more vulnerable for other reasons. Programme design needs to be *SRHR inclusive* instead of *SRHR exclusive*. In other words: avoid designing fragmented projects for specific outcomes; it is more effective and cost-effective to invest in a national SP programme. This would enhance the impacts of SP on a broad range of poverty and exclusion-related vulnerabilities. Linking SP programmes to other care services and information is an effective strategy for achieving inclusive development.

Operational lessons can be drawn from the experiences of SP programmes (mainly unconditional) in Africa:

- Transfer values should be large enough to make a difference to families' incomes
- It is essential that social transfers be delivered on time
- Targeting should be transparent and clearly communicated
- Transfers should be predictable, to allow households to plan, manage risk and invest in diverse activities
- The profile of beneficiaries will determine the type of impacts to be expected. ([UNICEF 2016](#))

2.3. Social protection & employability

In her pitch, Marleen Dekker (INCLUDE platform) outlined that most of the impacts of SP on employment are indirect and are through improved access to education and healthcare, among other things. Hence, instead of focusing on employment only, it is better to look at the impact of SP on employability, also because this includes all productive activities, such as care work, self-employment and informal work.

SP has high multiplier effects on income, ranging from 1.08 to 2.52 in Sub-Saharan Africa. This means that one euro invested in SP, can generate 0.08 to 1.52 additional euros in income on top of the transfer. This additional income stimulates the local economy (and vice versa) and enterprise development. According to Marleen Dekker, the myths of SP (higher fertility and disincentives to work) are falsified by the evidence.

The discussion kicked off with the question: what can explain the difference in multiplier effects? One of the explanations, according to Marleen Dekker, is differences in the design of SP programmes. These include the amount of transfers, the choice of targeting and the location in which the programme operates.

The main 'myth' discussed was the issue of disincentivizing work: does SP make people lazy? This concern remains prevalent, despite evidence showing otherwise. Even in the Netherlands, where SP instruments are mainstreamed into social policies, this remains a concern. In contrast, in developing countries, the idea of SP is new, which may explain the suspicion around the concept. Another explanation may be that SP is expected to 'kill two birds with one stone' (reduce poverty and improve food security), as outlined by Rachel Slater in her pitch.

The impacts of SP in Ghana, Rwanda and Brazil were also discussed. In Ghana, improved SRHR have resulted in improved employability. In Rwanda, participants in programmes switched from one to two meals a day within the first month of the programme. After three to four months, they also invested

in assets, such as tools or livestock. In general, investments in assets are often long-term results and depend on the size and regularity of the transfers. In Brazil, a country with a long history of SP, programmes were initially targeted at informal workers, which created an incentive for participants to in the informal sector. Now, people with a job in the formal sector can also participate.

It was concluded that micro-credit, in the form of loans for investment, should be preceded by micro-giving. Micro-giving enables beneficiaries to prepare for micro-credit, e.g. by developing financial skills by use of a financial diary. Micro-giving should, therefore, be seen as a jump start, which, when combined with improved access to services such as education and healthcare, can improve employability and, in turn, productive activity.

This also points to the importance of comprehensive approaches, meaning combining different SP instruments with other social policies (such as investments in infrastructure and access to schools). This comprehensive approach not only entails integrating existing or new policies, but also requires a focus on the structural causes hampering employability. These structural factors, such as lack of social networks, were stressed by the participants in this session and should, therefore, be part of a coordinated, integrated approach to improve employability.

What does the evidence say?

First of all, the assumption that SP is relatively new in developing countries is not entirely correct. As outlined, Brazil has a long history of SP programmes, particularly through Bolsa Familia. In Latin America, most countries [rolled out social insurance schemes](#) in the 1970s. However, [in Africa](#), most of the SP programmes were introduced after 2000.

Similar to the impacts on food security, most of the effects of social protection on employability are indirect effects, which occur through access to education, food of high nutritious value, healthcare, and increased income generally. The INCLUDE research group on '[Social protection in Uganda](#)', which investigates the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE) programme, concludes that a 1% increase in income is associated with an 11% increase in the likelihood of enrolment of school-age individuals (aged 6-24). Similarly, a 10% increase in income is associated with a 12% reduction in the average number of sick days taken in households. This effect is twice as large for poor households.

Income multipliers, [ranging from 1.08 to 2.52 dollars](#) return on each dollar invested in social protection, show how employability is improved by increased demand for labour. SP can also help to set up new businesses: studies in Nicaragua, Mexico and Zambia conclude that cash transfers increase the likelihood of households setting up non-agricultural businesses by [3, 4 and 17%](#), respectively.

Regarding the discussion on conditionality, the evidence shows that both CCTs and UCTs can contribute to employability. CCTs can have [large long-term impacts](#), for instance, when cash is transferred on the condition that children are enrolled in school in the early years. Linking income support to certain conditions that directly improve employability can, therefore, yield a double dividend.

UCTs on the other hand, also have the potential to stimulate investment in the early stages of a child's life, as they are often used to meet basic needs, such as for food and sanitation. The diversity

of impacts is largest with UCTs, as recipients are free to spend the cash according to their individual needs. Apart from earlier mentioned investments in food security, education and healthcare, impacts include: higher use of agricultural inputs (such as [in Lesotho](#)); improved market linkages (resulting in 'real income' multipliers of [1.84](#), [1.79](#) and [1.40](#) in Ethiopia, Zambia and Zimbabwe, respectively); increased on-farm activity (such as in [Ghana, Kenya and Zimbabwe](#)); and avoidance of [credit constraints and improved risk management](#). The latter, in turn, increases access to markets and productive investment in general.

Furthermore, *public works programmes* and *social insurance* have direct impacts on employment rates, as they increase employment opportunities and provide safety nets for unemployment. The jobs provided through a public works project in Sierra Leone resulted in a [26%](#) increase in the monthly incomes of participating households. The Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme in Ghana had similar results, [but also had](#) an indirect effect on employability through increased savings, debt reduction, improved social networks and positive spillover effects on the local economy. Investments in agriculture (which can be perceived as high risk) can use [social protection schemes](#) to lower the burden for entrepreneurs, particularly young entrepreneurs. Resilience against shocks, such as drought, can also be improved by insurance, such as [weather-index agricultural insurance](#), which has been used as part of the Productive Safety Net Programme in Ethiopia.

3. The governance of social protection

Social protection can, thus, be a trampoline from which to jump out of poverty, as it can potentially have positive impacts on food security, SRHR and employability. Yet, much of this potential depends on the design and implementation of programmes. Therefore, the sustainability of and political cooperation for social protection programmes were discussed. The discussion was started by Mayke Huijbregts (UNICEF Mozambique), who gave a presentation produced in cooperation with Eleasara Antunes of the Netherlands Embassy in Maputo.

3.1. Experiences from the south: the governance of social protection in Mozambique

The SP programme in Mozambique outlined by Mayke Huijbregts is led by the Government of Mozambique. The programme is managed by the National Social Action Council, which consists of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action and the National Institute of Social Action. The Dutch Embassy and UNICEF, as well as other development partners and civil society organizations, support the programme. All parties involved work together in the Social Action Working Group.

The Dutch have been engaged in Mozambique since 2008 and supported the government to expand the programme's coverage and service delivery. They built the institutional capacity of government organizations and supported the monitoring and accountability system. The cash transfer programme is 95% financed through the state budget (tax revenue). The Dutch Embassy and DFID contributed 5% in 2015, a reduction of 35% since 2008. The Dutch Embassy, UNICEF, ILO, IMF, and DFID have consistently advocated for increased fiscal space for SP. These organizations have also advocated for the inclusion of SP in the national poverty reduction strategy.

Mozambique started developing the SP system in 2005. The first phase was the establishment of a legal framework for SP. The second and current phase is the operationalization of policies. The Dutch Embassy and UNICEF provided technical support for the design and development of the system, including the improvement of enrolment and registration, the management and information system, and payment systems, as well as the creation of linkages with other systems.

Mozambique's new national strategy on SP (2016-2024) envisions four goals: enhancing the level of consumption and resilience; contributing towards the development of human capital; developing institutional capacity; and preventing and mitigating the risk of violence, abuse, exploitation, and discrimination. The design and implementation of the programme reaches different target groups. The most vulnerable groups are being reached with old age grants, disability grants, child grants, child-headed household grants, and a grant for orphans living in poor and vulnerable families. For households where members are unemployed, there is a public works programme. In response to specific shocks and natural disasters, multiform support is available. A social services component serves as a preventative and protection service in the community. The programme will cover 1,131,569 individuals in 2019.

Mayke Huijbregts emphasized that the government must be in the driving seat of any SP intervention. Partners should empower government dialogue and touch the heart of policymakers. It is important for partners to unite, harmonize and coordinate with the government for SP to work.

3.2. Sustainable programmes

Social protection programmes often do not run long enough to maximize their impact. The reason is that most impacts take time to unfold. Yet, despite the amount of social protection programmes in

developing countries, programmes often end quickly and abruptly. Social protection programmes are often funded by international donors such as the World Food Programme. One of the main questions in this session was how programmes can become (financially) owned by national governments.

Evidence points to the impact of integrated programmes being greatest in the long term. A good example is the PSNP, which started in 2006, and in which, according to Elisabeth Farmer, the most progress has been made from 2010-2014.

To set up a financially-sustainable programme, it is important to gradually shift the funding of the programme to the national government. International organizations can focus on capacity development and facilitating transfers, such as in the case of UNICEF in Mozambique and Zambia. Yet, donors also have to realize that commitment to long-term projects will have larger impacts than short-term projects of five-years duration or less. This can also reduce the need for emergency aid in the future. Therefore, a sustainable programme may mean shifting funding to the national level over time, but with the commitment of international donors in the long term.

It has been argued that, in the Netherlands, it is important for social protection policies to be supported and strengthened by different departments. Initiatives need to be integrated within existing policies for multiple themes (e.g. food security and SRHR). At the national level in developing countries, the existence of an effective and transparent taxation system has been mentioned as an important prerequisite for a successful SP programme.

3.3. The politics of social protection

Related to the issue of finding sustainable finance for social protection, is the process of establishing long-term cooperation on social protection. This includes finding the political momentum and engaging in a continued dialogue with all relevant stakeholders.

Finding opportunities for designing and implementing SP policies at the national level needs to be done within the political context of countries or transnational political organizations. This means taking into account the political history of nations and trying to convince multiple political parties of the importance of SP. In some countries, the image of SP as a political instrument used to 'buy' votes may need extra attention.

Early in the session, the issue of ownership was discussed. On the one hand, it can be argued that national governments should own programmes, with international donors and political partners (such as the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs) acting as mere facilitators. Yet, others argued that SP programmes need to commence even when national governments are not fully convinced and that trust and ownership can be built over time.

Elections can be a good opportunity for national policy stakeholders to address SP, as many developing countries have a history of cash transfers being on the agenda during elections. Yet, this does not mean that governments are committed to SP in the long term or in a structural manner. Substantial and long-term investment may lag behind. The question, therefore, is how to make use of political momentum in order to maintain focus in the long run.

Another issue discussed was the extent to which SP should be functioning within a (sometimes malfunctioning) political-economic system, or should be used to change the system from within. Participants argued that we should not expect too much from SP and politicizing SP may deteriorate



perceptions of SP programmes. The fear is that citizens will see SP as a political, rather than social or economic, tool.

4. Discussion: recurring issues

Several issues recurred in more than one session or were stressed as key issues. These are discussed more substantially and individually in this section.

4.1. Targeting vs. universality

A question that came up in all thematic sessions was whether or not programmes targeted at certain demographic groups (populations in certain regions, or women or children, for instance) were more effective than universal programmes. In an article published in 2009, Slater wrote²:

“The use of social categorical and geographical approaches to reduce targeting costs introduces a significant trade-off between maximising the number of poor people that are included in programmes, and minimising the number of non-poor people that are included. This is a challenge for both design and implementation. In the case of social categorical targeting, there is a risk that some people belonging to this group may not be poor. Evidence from Ghana suggests, other indicators which are less directly linked to social groups, such as the physical state of shelter (mud walls, mud floors) or the number of years of education of the households head may offer the best proxy indicators of poverty in terms of reducing the trade-off between cost and poverty impacts. The implication is, for demographic or geographical approaches to be effective, there must be robust empirical evidence that they correlate well (or at least better than other indicators) with poverty.

One issue that came up in the targeting debate was if targeting women, rather than men or the household in general, is more effective. Participants of the ‘SP and employability’ session mentioned the image of men as spending transfers on alcohol or tobacco. Women are generally seen as more reliable target beneficiaries for transfers, because of their central position in households.

According to Marleen Dekker, there is no convincing evidence that targeting men for SP does not work. This may be because the effect does not exist, or because it is not documented. Generally, programmes targeting women directly have higher results. Yet, these results are different in different places. For instance, in Burkina Faso, higher effects were reported in programmes targeting men. According to Marleen Dekker, the impact depends on the household composition. Whether marriages are monogamous or polygamous also impacts on the effects on women and gender relations. Other reasons for targeting women are the high returns for the family as a whole, the higher need to give to women because of their vulnerable position, and better repayment rates by women, as well as the donor preference for empowering women.

[Improving the knowledge](#) of women of social protection systems, particularly voucher programmes, is key to improving their participation in such programmes. Moreover, it is important to take into account [the aspirations, capacities and needs of women](#) within their socio-cultural and socio-economic contexts to maximize the impact of social protection interventions. However, in order to prevent intra-household clashes (including domestic violence), it is important to include men in SP programmes, even when they are not direct recipients of transfers. This involvement can increase the support for women and improve results.

A promising example is the targeting of households in the PSNP programme, which occurred through a multi-stage approach:

² Slater, R. (2009). Cited in: [Slater, R. & McCord, A. \(2009\)](#).

- The first stage consisted of geographical allocation (318 districts were selected based on the amount of people receiving food aid).
- The second stage consisted of targeting food insecure households within these districts, which was done using community-based wealth ranking.

This community-based approach has been effective in targeting the poorest households. In general, it is important to take existing social networks into account, including their own built-in social practices, such as mutual sharing and support. Designers of SP programmes should consider to what extent these practices compromise or support the effectiveness of the programme.

However, this multi-stage approach can also lead to the exclusion of vulnerable people in non-targeted areas. According to the interim findings of the [INCLUDE research group](#) 'Social protection in the Afar region', which investigates the implementation of the PSNP in the Afar region of Ethiopia, there is a risk of exclusion of specific groups such as youth and pastoralists. SP programmes should, therefore, take a dynamic approach to targeting and continuously update their list of beneficiaries.

4.2. Short-term vs. long-term impacts

Particularly the indirect effects of social protection often take time to materialize. The PSNP in Ethiopia illustrates the importance of patience and the evolution of SP systems. According to Elisabeth Farmer, the results in an evaluation of 2010 were relatively low (compared to the baseline in 2006), but very high in 2014, meaning that most results became visible in the later stages of a programme.

The main explanation is that social protection programmes are an ongoing learning process, adapting to the specific needs of the contexts in which they operate. The PSNP has been refined throughout its course, for instance, to make implementation more efficient. Therefore, according to Rachel Slater, among others, in the first stage of the programme it should be about getting the basics right, with regular and substantial transfers. This should be seen as a preparatory phase. For instance, participation in micro-credit programmes can come in at a later stage. Successful, integrated approaches implement different parts of programmes at different stages. For instance, graduation programmes usually provide transfers first, before providing asset packages such as business training.

This also means that it is important for international donors to commit to long-term SP programmes. According to Slater, a commitment of 20 to 30 years is likely to result in a situation where no development aid is no longer needed. This raises the question of when a SP programme should stop. There is no blueprint for this. Participants concluded that this depends to a large extent on the economic growth of a country or region: graduation out of poverty depends on the possibility of engaging in productive employment. Yet, these possibilities can be hindered by various constraints, ranging from (inter)national trade regulations to local socio-cultural contexts. Therefore, in certain situations, particularly in the case of vulnerable groups within isolated, rural contexts, SP programmes may need to continue longer.

5. Policy implications

Although this seminar was an exploratory meeting to scope the possibilities for the integration of social protection into Dutch development cooperation, several conclusions can be drawn based on the knowledge shared in the discussion.

- Evidence shows that, generally speaking, social protection works to improve food security, SRHR and employability through a wide range of impacts (including increased income, access to education and women's empowerment). The impact (and type of programme chosen) depends on the focus of the programme. For instance, SRHR programmes are more likely to be conditional than unconditional programmes for food security. Integrated approaches, combining different types of SP interventions with other social policies are most effective.
- It is crucial to invest for a long time, as the impacts of SP programmes often materialize in the long term. To make investments cost-effective, the long-term commitment of donors is essential.
- Part of this long-term focus is the realization that SP programmes are learning processes that require a dynamic approach. It starts with 'getting the basics rights', including regular and substantial cash transfers, for example. Through constant monitoring and evaluation, the choice of targeting and type of programmes need to be reconsidered. This includes keeping an eye on groups that were excluded through the targeting used in earlier stages of the programme.
- Programmes aimed at women are generally more effective in catalysing development within the household. Yet, programmes should take men into account to maximize impact and avoid intra-household clashes.
- UCTs have the widest range of impacts. CCTs can have many indirect positive impacts (e.g. through education), but can also be inefficient and have adverse effects in the short term. In the long term, UCTs and CCTs can both be effective in increasing food security, mostly when part of an integrated approach. CCTs are most likely to be effective when there are single and context-specific issues hindering development (e.g. gender inequalities or lack of school enrolment).
- Cash transfer programmes need to make sure that payments are substantial and regular. In order to use SP as a trampoline, regular payments are essential to prevent recipients from being pulled back into poverty.
- Setting up the multi-level organization of SP programmes requires time as well as timing. In cooperation with national embassies, the right political moment should be sought to stir up the debate around SP in the national political arena.

Annex 1: programme of the seminar

09:00–09:15	Welcome
09:15–09:30	Introduction by Reina Buijs
09:30–10:00	Introduction to thematic sessions, including 3 pitches: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Social protection and food security (by Rachel Slater, ODI) 2) Social protection and SRHR (by Jolijn van Haaren, UNICEF the Netherlands) 3) Social protection and employability (by Marleen Dekker, INCLUDE)
10:00–10:45	Thematic sessions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Social protection and food security (facilitated by Frits van der Wal, Ministry of Foreign Affairs) 2) Social protection and SRHR (facilitated by Maarten van den Bosch, Ministry of Foreign Affairs) 3) Social protection and employability (facilitated by Johan Veul, Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
10:45–11:10	Tea and coffee break
11:10–11:50	Presentation on the governance of social protection in Mozambique (by Mayke Huijbregts, UNICEF Mozambique)
11:50–12:45	Governance sessions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Sustainable finance of social protection (facilitated by Rafael Osório, IPC-UNDP) 2) Political dialogue of social protection (facilitated by Nicholas Awortwi, INCLUDE/PASGR)
12:45–13:00	Closing remarks and discussion