

## The rise of social protection in Sub-Saharan Africa

**Inclusive development** - defined as a pattern and pace of development in which the poor and most vulnerable groups participate and which is characterized by income growth as well as decreasing inequality in both income and non-income dimensions of wellbeing - is high on the agenda of Sub-Saharan African governments. The building blocks for inclusive development are economic transformation, productive employment creation and social protection. Social protection plays multiple roles in achieving inclusive development. It is linked to inclusive development through various transmission channels, such as the reduction of inequality, increased labour participation, productive assets protection and accumulation, human capital development, and the strengthening of social and collective citizenship rights, institutions and (local) economic multiplier effects.

Despite the expansion of social protection in Africa, national governments are often reluctant to introduce comprehensive social protection programmes as these require a reallocation of resources and are often considered too expensive. There is, therefore, a need for evidence-based arguments to convince policy-makers that investing scarce resources in social protection programmes is a cost-effective exercise in the long term because of their impact on poverty reduction and social mobility. In addition, evidence on the effectiveness of social protection programmes is important to inform the design, implementation and expansion of social protection programmes.

Social protection in Africa has a long history. Prior to formalized social welfare schemes, African societies relied on the extended family and kinship networks<sup>1</sup>. At independence, governments in most African countries initiated or built on colonial provident schemes, which targeted workers in the public service. Increased attention to social protection started in the late 1980s and 1990s as part of the social dimension of development to mitigate the adverse effects of structural adjustment policies, especially the inability of people to cope with shocks due to a reduction in government expenditure on social welfare and public services<sup>2</sup>.

Since 2000, social protection programmes, especially conditional cash transfers, have expanded remarkably<sup>3</sup>. The phenomenal rise of social protection interventions in Africa has been viewed by some as the rise of the welfare state<sup>4</sup>. Despite this expansion, compared to high-income countries, social protection coverage in Africa is low and varies by country. For example, pension schemes tend to offer very limited benefits to those who are covered and largely cover workers in the public sector<sup>5</sup>.

At the same time, over the past three decades, several continent-wide deliberations have emphasized the need to initiate social protection schemes. These deliberations include the [African Common Position on Human and Social Development in Africa in 1994](#); Ouagadougou Declaration and Plan of Action in 2004 on the [Declaration on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa](#); [Social Policy Framework for Africa in 2008](#); [Yaoundé Tripartite Declaration on the Implementation of the Social Protection Floor](#) in October 2010; Social Ministers' Khartoum Declaration on Social Policy Action in 2010; and, most recently, the Ministers' [Addis Ababa Declaration on Social Protection for Inclusive Development](#) in April 2015. In addition, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) Africa Region has also identified [social security and social protection](#) as key areas that labour movements in Africa must focus on to improve the welfare of the labour force. Furthermore, '[Social Protection and Poverty Reduction](#)' is a division of the African Development Bank's Human and Social Development Department. Moreover, numerous conferences and workshops focusing on social protection have been held across the continent. For instance, the Southern African Social Protection Experts Network (SASPEN) and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Zambia hosted a two-day conference on the '[Sustainability of Social Protection in the SADC: Economic Returns, Political Will and Fiscal Space](#)' in Johannesburg on 20-21 October 2015 (click here for [concept note](#) and [presentations](#)).

Social protection interventions in Africa include direct welfare programmes (conditional and unconditional cash transfers, school feeding programmes, food aid), productivity enhancing programmes (work programmes, subsidies) and market interventions (price controls)<sup>6</sup>. The INCLUDE Platform acknowledges that social protection plays [multiple roles](#) in production, protection, re-distribution, reproduction and social cohesion. Despite weaknesses in data collection and in the monitoring and evaluation of safety net programmes<sup>7</sup>, studies on the impact of social protection interventions in African countries are increasing. One of the databases that has a collection of such studies is the [Productive Safety Nets Gap Maps](#) (PSNGM) by The International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie). The PSNGM database shows various safety net interventions including social protection, financial services and microcredit support, as well as the outcomes of these interventions based on impact evaluations and systematic reviews. The outcome indicators of the PSNGM studies have implications for inclusive development and are, therefore, relevant to INCLUDE, especially in relation to how the programmes affect people's human capital, assets, employment, resilience, income, living standards, empowerment, social exclusion, and health, as well as their cost-effectiveness.

Some of the PSNGM impact evaluations and systematic reviews reveal positive outcomes of social protection programmes. For example, in Ghana, the [Livelihoods Empowerment Against Poverty \(LEAP\)](#)<sup>8</sup> cash transfer programme has led to an increase in savings and reduced loan holdings, enabled beneficiaries to re-establish or strengthen social networks, led to increase in household heads who feel happy about their life, increased school enrolment among secondary school-aged children, reduced grade repetition among both primary and secondary school-aged children, and reduced absenteeism among primary school-aged children. Secondary school enrolment impacts are limited to boys, but attendance impacts are bigger for girls. However, LEAP has had no impact on household consumption. Furthermore, an assessment of the impact of the [Productive Safety Net Programme \(PSNP\) and Other Food Security Programme \(OFSP\) in rural Ethiopia](#)<sup>9</sup> found that, although the low exposure level did not improve outcomes, high levels of exposure to the intervention seemed to have positive effects on food security, business development and technology adoption. Another study in the database systematically reviewed [the impact of employment guarantee schemes and cash transfers on the poor](#)<sup>10</sup>, consisting of 37 studies on 29 countries from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific. The review found that both interventions had positive and strong beneficial outcomes on expenditure, although their impact on poverty indicators and income poverty was inconclusive.

The World Bank has developed '[ASPIRE: The Atlas of Social Protection - Indicators of Resilience and Equity](#)', which covers many aspects of social protection interventions, including coverage, benefits and impacts on poverty and inequality. In addition to showing that the Sub-Saharan Africa region has the least coverage of social protection and labour, it reveals that conditional cash transfers are the most common form of social assistance in the region. It also shows that social assistance has contributed to a reduction in poverty and inequality in some countries. For example, social assistance in Kenya in 2005 led to a reduction in the poverty headcount by 1.7% and in Ghana in 2012 led to a reduction in the poverty headcount by 0.1% and poverty gap by 0.4%. In addition to the reduction of poverty and inequality, from an INCLUDE Platform perspective there are other transmission channels relevant to inclusive development through social protection, as already mentioned above.

### **INCLUDE's social protection theme**

To generate evidence on how social protection contributes to inclusive development, the INCLUDE Platform has identified the cost-effectiveness of social protection interventions compared to other social policy interventions as an under-researched area. Consequently, to determine the cost-effectiveness of social protection interventions that have led to inclusive development and through which mechanisms, NWO-WOTRO and INCLUDE have [called for proposals](#) to investigate the cost-effectiveness of social protection interventions, compared to other social policies that aim to achieve the same objective in Sub-Saharan Africa. The proposals submitted were reviewed and seven research groups selected to conduct the research. The research group titles and their composition are as follows.

- **Social Protection in Uganda:** This research compares the cost-effectiveness of the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE), Early Childhood Development Programme, Public Works Programme and Food Assets Program (FFA) in Uganda. The evidence generated will guide decisions on expansion of the SAGE programme. The research group partners are: Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Uganda; Makerere University, Uganda; Maastricht University (MU), the Netherlands; and University of Manchester, United Kingdom.
- **Post Trauma Services in Uganda:** This research compares the cost-effectiveness of cash transfers on their own with cash transfers combined with other complementary interventions (i.e., post trauma-related health and psycho-social support) and support through radio and social media. The aim is to generate evidence on a combination of interventions that would be cost effective for economic empowerment and facilitate the inclusion of women in post-conflict contexts. The research group partners are: Isis-Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE), Uganda; Makerere and Mbarara Universities, Uganda; and Tilburg University, the Netherlands.
- **Weather Insurance for Ethiopian Farmers:** This study examines the cost effectiveness of including agricultural weather insurance as an additional component of the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), as opposed to providing the beneficiaries of the PSNP with an additional cash transfer. The findings are expected to be useful for policy-makers in their ongoing efforts to expand and improve the PSNP. The research group partners are: Mekelle University, Ethiopia; Relief Society of Tigray, Ethiopia; Nyala Insurance Share Company, Ethiopia; Lingnan University (LU), Hong Kong; Wageningen University and Research Centre, the Netherlands; and Columbia University, USA.
- **Social Protection in the Afar Region:** This study evaluates the effectiveness of the PSNP and other social protection interventions in the Afar region on poverty reduction, risk minimization, food security and livelihood improvement. The aim is to generate evidence of alternative social protection interventions that can contribute to inclusive development in pastoral communities. The research group partners are: Adigrat University (ADU), Ethiopia; the Pastoral and Environmental Network in the Horn of Africa (PENHA), United Kingdom; and University College London (UCL), United Kingdom.
- **Social health protection in Ghana and Kenya:** This research aims to generate knowledge on the effectiveness of cash transfer programmes and social health protection policies by comparing cash transfers to fee waivers (Kenya) and health insurance (Ghana). It also seeks to establish the complementarity of the two interventions and how the accumulation of health-related human capital and its spill-over effects contribute to inclusive development. The research group partners are: University of Ghana and University for Development Studies, Ghana; University of Nairobi, Kenya; Hochschule Bonn-Rhein-Sieg and European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI), Germany; and University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands.
- **Free healthcare versus health insurance in Kenya:** This study looks at the cost-effectiveness of the free maternal healthcare offered in public health facilities in Kenya and the Community Healthcare Plan (TCHP) health insurance programme in Nandi County, Kenya. It focuses on assessing the effectiveness of targeting, quality of care, utilization and out-of-pocket expenditure of the two approaches to healthcare provision interventions. The research group partners are: African Population and Health Research Centre (APHRC), Kenya; Health Policy Project, Kenya; and Amsterdam Institute for International Development (AIID) and PharmAccess Foundation, the Netherlands.
- **Maternity Fee Waivers in Kenya:** This research compares the cost-effectiveness of vouchers targeting vulnerable women to the free maternity care provided in public health facilities in Kenya. It considers the

impact of the two interventions on maternal and child health in Kenya and how the link between the interventions and other social support systems works. The research group partners are: Ministry of Health, Kenya; Maseno University, Kenya; and Tropical and Public Health Institute Swiss (TPH) and University of Bern, Switzerland.

A key feature of all these studies is that they focus on mechanisms through which the selected social protection interventions contribute to inclusive development. Furthermore, these studies compare the different elements of complementary social protection programmes. The table below shows the different research groups, the interventions they study and the probable mechanisms through which the interventions lead to inclusive development.

### Social protection research projects, interventions and pathways to inclusive development

Research title	Intervention	Pathways to inclusive development					
		Asset protection & accumulation	Consumption or expenditure	Labour participation	Education & human capital	Income	Other mechanisms
Social Protection in Uganda	Non-contributory transfers & conditional cash transfers, Public Works Programme	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Social mobility
Post Trauma Services in Uganda	Cash transfers, trauma support (medical & mental, media support (radio & social media)					✓	Decision making, gender empowerment
Weather Insurance for Ethiopian Farmers	Safety nets, weather index insurance, conditional cash transfers	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Social Protection in the Afar Region	Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP)	✓				✓	Equity, women's empowerment, vulnerability, poverty, kinship networks
Social health protection in Ghana & Kenya	Cash transfers, social health	✓		✓	✓		Equality, women's empowerment
Free healthcare versus health insurance in Kenya	Maternity vouchers, free maternity services	✓					Access to health services, community involvement
Maternity Fee Waivers in Kenya	Fee waivers/free maternity services; health insurance		✓		✓	✓	Targeting, quality of care, utilization

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- <sup>1</sup>Kalusopa, T., Dicks, R. & Osei-Boateng, C. (2012) *Social protection schemes in Africa*. Windhoek: African Labour Research Network.
- <sup>2</sup> Mkandawire, T. (2011) 'Running while others walk: Knowledge and the challenge of Africa's development.' *Africa Development*, 36(2), 1-36; and Adesina, J. (2010) *Rethinking the social protection paradigm: Social policy in Africa's development*. Background paper for the European Report on Development.
- <sup>3</sup> Honorati, M., Gentilini, U. & Yemtsov, R.G. (2015) *The state of social safety nets 2015*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.
- <sup>4</sup> Ferguson, J. (2015) *Give a man a fish: Reflections on the new politics of distribution*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- <sup>5</sup> ILO (2014) *World social protection report 2014/15: Building economic recovery, inclusive development and social justice*. Geneva: International Labour Office.
- <sup>6</sup> Omilola, B. & Kaniki, S. (2014) *Social protection in Africa: A review of potential contribution and impact on poverty reduction*. Pretoria: UNDP.
- <sup>7</sup> Monchuk, V. (2014) *Reducing poverty and investing in people: The new role of safety nets in Africa*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- <sup>8</sup> Handa, S., Park, M., Darko, R.O., Osei-Akoto, I., Davis, B. & Daidone, S. (2013) *Livelihood empowerment against poverty program impact evaluation*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, Carolina Population Center.
- <sup>9</sup> Gilligan, D.O., Hoddinott, J. & Taffesse, A.S. (2009) 'The impact of Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme and its linkages.' *The Journal of Development Studies*, 45:10, 1684-1706.
- <sup>10</sup> Hagen-Zanker, J., McCord, A. & Holmes, R. (2011) *The impact of employment guarantee schemes and cash transfers on the poor*. London: Overseas Development Institute.

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Weblink: <http://includeplatform.net/downloads/the-rise-of-social-protection-in-sub-saharan-africa/>