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IMPLEMENTING SOCIAL TRANSFERS: TEN KEY MESSAGES

"Want is a needless scandal due to not taking the trouble to prevent it."

Sir William Beveridge (1879-1963) British social researcher, civil servant, academic, and Liberal politician. His 1942 report on a contributory, near comprehensive social welfare system was the major source for the post-World War II British welfare state.

- **Start with a stock-take** of all existing expenditures targeted at the poor and the hungry (i.e. on and off budget; government, donor and NGO; including food aid and subsidies). Identify what works and determine why. Look for programmes to scale up and ones to shut down. Learn lessons and base the future programme on that evidence.
- **Take the long view:** social protection, like health and education, is an essential social service that requires sustained support and on-budget funding. Replace reactive short-term interventions with predictable long-term programmes.
- **Produce a shared national vision** of where you want social protection to be in twenty years time and how it will relate to a wider development agenda, by facilitating a broad-based national debate on the right to social protection.
- **Develop a social protection framework** which expresses that vision and maps out a progressive but feasible and pragmatic path for the establishment of a national social protection system; and get all stakeholders to sign up to it. Then take time to communicate this framework, and the thinking behind it, to the population at large, using the media and other channels.
- **Start small and then expand**, not vice versa, as reducing the scope could be politically difficult. For example, set cash benefits initially at a low level so that they can be increased rather than reduced later; target smaller groups (for example using age criteria) first, and expand later.
- **Capitalise on the convergence around social protection:** many different interest groups share a common agenda in advocating for social protection (elderly, children, disabled, OVC, HIV/AIDS, etc.), so governments should co-ordinate their programmes with the whole range of stakeholders, not simply one or two social groups.

Remember:

- Social protection should be needs-driven, not resource-driven.
- Social protection should be nationally-driven not donor-driven.
- Keep things simple when it comes to targeting, conditionality and delivery systems.
- Carefully consider the costs of not providing social protection.

- **Don't confuse the "entry point" with the "exit point":** your initial reason for opening a dialogue may be hunger or OVC, but that doesn't mean your programme needs to be confined to that focus, nor that you cannot change your priorities later. There are many broader programmes that may be more effective and more sustainable (child benefits, pensions, universal transfers, etc).

- **Enlist the support of donors and NGOs**, making it clear that it is time to stop piloting and pursuing their own agendas, and time to start formulating and implementing, together, comprehensive national programmes

- **Involve beneficiaries and their communities** as active partners in the design of social protection initiatives, respect their preferences, and only implement programmes that will make a meaningful difference to their lives. Don't just consult with the men.

- **Involve the private sector** in areas where they can assist effectively, such as logistics, distribution, storage, wholesaling/retailing, financial services, information systems; be transparent and consistent in dealings with them, and acknowledge their need for recognition and/or remuneration.

"A decent concern for the poor is the true test of civilisation."

Dr Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) British lexicographer, critic, poet and political pamphleteer.

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