

# ROSA Watch

**Rosa Watch** is a monthly bulletin that aims to bring you up-to-date useful information about food security, and do so rapidly and directly.

Each issue has:

- 1) a main subject with a common database of reference documents available from the **ROSA online library**
- 2) a selection of new documents put online and regularly updated by a watch on subjects dealt with by the network.

**In this issue:**

→ **ROSA Document Database:**

On the subject of **social protection in West and Central Africa**

→ **ROSA News - May 2009**

Would you like to tell us about some news or a recently published article, or just make a comment? Contact the team of moderators ([animation@reseau-rosa.eu](mailto:animation@reseau-rosa.eu)). All contributions are welcome!

## THIS MONTH'S EDITORIAL

**This month's bulletin presents the UNICEF reports on social protection in West and Central Africa**

Social protection is now considered to be a decisive element in poverty reduction strategies, and is part of the effort to reduce vulnerability to economic, social and natural shocks.

UNICEF launched a wide ranging study in 2007 for a better understanding of existing social protection mechanisms in West and Central Africa, and to explore the opportunities and limits of reaching the most vulnerable groups. The study was done in collaboration with the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and local researchers. The first five regional thematic reports were published in May. Five other country reports from Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Senegal and Mali will soon be available, together with a regional overview.

The five thematic reports (for the moment available in English only) review the literature and relevant experiences in the region involving the different dimensions of social protection. The first and third reports address child vulnerability in relation to social protection and cash transfer systems. The second looks at the concept of fiscal space for social protection programmes. The fourth report studies health funding mechanisms (particularly health insurance) and the fifth gives an overview and an analysis of the issues of the main child protection systems in West and Central Africa.

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## ONLINE LIBRARY

### Social Protection in West and Central Africa

#### *Strengthening social protection for children - UNICEF, ODI (2009)*

This document presents an overview of existing social protection initiatives in West and Central Africa and analyses the way child-specific problems of poverty and vulnerability (child mortality, missed schooling, child exploitation...) are dealt with. Figures show that children make up over half the total population of the region, and that children are over-represented in poverty statistics, whence the importance of considering them in all poverty reduction strategies and social protection programmes. However, current programmes are very small scale, dependent on donors and international organisations, fairly uncoordinated and have little in the way of monitoring and assessment.

In English: [Strengthening social protection for children](#)

#### *Fiscal space for strengthened social protection - UNICEF, ODI (2009)*

Implementing social protection programmes can be challenged for tax reasons, even when the programmes are deemed necessary at the political and institutional level. This document emphasises the importance of considering the question of "fiscal space", that is, government budgetary leeway for financing new initiatives without damaging the country's macroeconomic stability. West and Central African countries generally have very limited budgets, except for a few oil-producing countries. In these conditions, fiscal space can only be created if political space already exists that legitimises new initiatives such as social protection systems. The document offers a methodological framework for evaluating the fiscal space and applies it to the five case studies: Congo, Equatorial Guinea (greatest fiscal space due to oil revenue) Ghana (smallest fiscal space), Senegal and Mali.

In English: [Fiscal space for strengthened social protection](#)

#### *Child poverty: a role for cash transfers? - UNICEF, ODI (2009)*

The document looks at the impact of cash transfers on child poverty. This type of social assistance is still marginal in the region, but is attracting growing interest. It can have a number of positive impacts: enabling families to invest in their children's education, health and nutrition, reducing child labour, etc. In order to verify these assumptions, the document simulates the ex ante impact of two types of transfers (universal and targeted) on child poverty in three countries (Congo, Mali and Senegal). Costs and budget feasibility of these programmes are also estimated. The results show that universal systems have greater positive impacts, but are more expensive than targeted systems, which make them less feasible unless the necessary fiscal space is created.

In English: [Child poverty: a role for cash transfers?](#)

#### *Maternal and child health: the social protection dividend - UNICEF, ODI (2009)*

Economic access to health services is considered as the major obstacle to their use. Accordingly, setting up health financing schemes is the determining factor for improving access to health services, particularly for vulnerable groups. This document reviews the strengths and weaknesses of the different types of health financing schemes in West and Central Africa. It shows that paying health services, in which users pay fees according to their use of services (degree and frequency of illness) and not according to their ability to pay, have the most negative impact on health. Inversely, health insurance systems are widely promoted, but they come up against major inherent limits in implementing them. In West and Central Africa, health insurance is only available for a small minority of people, working in the public or formal sector. High performance administrative capacities are needed to manage contributions and reimburse members. Health services must also be high quality to justify the contributions. The trend is to set up more health insurance systems at a local level to reach people who are excluded from classic systems. However, it appears that it is not possible to guarantee universal access to primary health services on the basis of insurance schemes alone. Governments still need to increase expenditure to improve the quality and management of health services and subsidise them.

In English: [Maternal and child health: the social protection dividend](#)

***Promoting synergies between child protection and social protection - UNICEF, ODI (2009)***

This document identifies seven main factors of child vulnerability. It gives an overview and an analysis of the issues of the main child protection systems in West and Central Africa, including a legal framework for children's rights; government institutions responsible for promoting rights; prevention services and awareness-raising activities; reintegration social services for victims of violence and abuse; links with other non-governmental players. The results show the extent to which existing services are fragmented, poorly funded and highly dependent on international agencies and NGOs.

In English: [Promoting synergies between child protection and social protection](#)

## ROSA NEWS

### New documents online

***European Commission regional seminar on food security in Asia 26-30 April 2009, Dhaka, Bangladesh***

The acts and presentations of this regional seminar are available on the ROSA website under the heading "[Looking back on past events](#)".

During the seminar, one day was dedicated to discuss the "access" dimension of food security and how it is taken in account in European Commission-backed food security programmes and strategies. Two experiences in Bangladesh were also presented.

**Philippe Bertrand**, AIDCO E6 Unit, intervened as to help the delegates understanding the logic behind « access to food » and « social transfers » in order to support innovative responses to fight extreme poverty and food insecurity, therefore restoring the pillar « access to food » and promote social transfers approaches.

In English: [Promoting access to food and social transfers to fight extreme poverty](#)

**Nicholas Freeland** from the Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme (RHVP) further analyzed the role of social transfers, as an effective approach to fight food insecurity and extreme poverty. His presentation analyses the multi-dimensional impacts of social transfers on poverty,

hunger, markets, employment, equity, health, education and gender equality in southern and eastern Africa.

In English: [Social transfers: an effective approach to fight food insecurity and extreme poverty](#)

**Roy Gunendu**, presented an in-depth analysis about the approach developed by the NGO BRAC related to the social protection for ultra poor in Bangladesh. The objective is to bring about sustainable improvements in the lives of the Specially Targeted Ultra Poor.

In English: [Challenging the frontier of poverty reduction](#)

**Manjuri Alam**, Task manager of Food Security of the EC Delegation in Bangladesh, presented the results of EC funded program in Bangladesh REOPA-Rural employment which contributes to poverty alleviation in rural areas and mainstreaming women into development programmes.

In English: [Rural employment opportunities for public assets](#)

***World hunger series: Hunger and markets – World Food Programme (April 2009)***

According to this report, well-functioning food markets are central to ending hunger. Not only must enough food be produced to meet consumption needs, but this food must also be accessible. When food markets are functioning well, they can create jobs and stimulate economic growth by spurring diversification of food systems. This can lead to more equal distributions of income and purchasing power, and thus increased nutritional well-being and enhanced food security. This issue of the World Hunger Series highlights the major opportunities and risks facing households and outlines strategic priorities for policies and investment.

In English: [Hunger and markets](#)

***Food Outlook : Global market analysis - FAO (June 2009)***

This FAO report presents this year's forecast of another good cereal crop. Accordingly, world food availability appears less vulnerable to shocks than it was during the 2008 food crisis. Despite steeply increasing prices over the past few weeks, international prices of most agricultural commodities dropped in 2009 compared to record highs in 2008, indicating that many markets are returning to equilibrium once again. But food prices remain high in many countries and access of people to food is threatened by job and

income loss, and other consequences of the world financial crisis.

In English: [Food Outlook: global market analysis](#)

***Étude de base de la sécurité alimentaire et de la nutrition - Mali Food Security Commissariat, UNICEF, WFP (March 2009)***

For a better understanding of the background to food insecurity vulnerability in Mali, the Early Warning System of the Food Security Commission (SAP/CSA) working with UNICEF and WFP has undertaken a basic national study on food security and nutrition (EBSAN). The main results are on the number of households in situations of food insecurity, their geographical distribution and distribution with regard to "life system" areas. The authors suggest two sets of guidelines applied specifically to the north and south of the country on measures that need implementing to fight food insecurity and malnutrition.

In French: [Etude de base sur la sécurité alimentaire et la nutrition](#)

***Participatory impact assessment, a guide for practitioners - Tufts University (May 2009, October 2008)***

Participatory impact assessments (PIA) often present a normative framework based on indicators related to international standards. This report aims to help practitioners carry out participatory impact assessments of projects for which there is no internationally recognised indicator, such as food security or livelihoods. One of the objectives of the guide is to show how PIA can be used to overcome the weaknesses of conventional humanitarian project assessment and monitoring. It also provides a means for practitioners to overcome the problems of poor or lacking reference data. An eight-stage approach for designing a participatory impact assessment is given.

In French: [Evaluation d'impact participative](#)

In English: [Participatory Impact Assessment](#)

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**On ROSA's website**

***Lessons from experiences in reducing malnutrition***

In April, ROSA launched a request for feedback to improve experience sharing in **preventing and reducing malnutrition**, especially chronic malnutrition. The feedback will be used at European Commission level to prepare two international meetings planned for June and September this year in Brussels and will help EuropeAid develop the toolkit it is planning.

**See the new feedback from ROSA's members on our dedicated page:**

[Lessons from experiences in reducing malnutrition](#)

*This bulletin was written by the GRET team in charge of animating ROSA (Operational Food Security Network). It is an initiative of AIDCO E6 (thematic support for food security, rural development and environment) in collaboration with AIDCO G4 (Training and Knowledge Management). The viewpoints expressed do not in any case represent the official European Commission viewpoint.*