

ROSA Newsletter



OPERATIONAL FOOD SECURITY NETWORK

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IEWS ON CURRENT ISSUES



Addressing food and nutrition security through the implementation of national social transfer programmes

This question was at the heart of the regional seminar organised at the initiative of the European Commission from April 17–20 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso¹. This meeting aimed to discuss, with national and regional actors, on the establishment of permanent social transfer systems that could respond to cyclical and structural crises in the Sahel. This article discusses the key messages that emerged from the seminar and the recommendations formulated for a better future use of social transfers within integrated strategies to improve the resilience, food security and nutrition.

● Why did the Commission organize this regional seminar and what was expected of it?

For several years, the European Union has been developing a comprehensive, multi-sector approach to food and nutrition security². The recent food crises have revealed the limitations of traditional responses to overcome the structural causes of food insecurity and malnutrition. In the Sahel, the situation for the poor has worsened in recent years. Today, the poorest households have low levels of productive assets. The increasingly frequent food crises do not allow poor households to restore their livelihoods before the next shock. Almost half of the rural population is facing structural food and nutrition insecurity, with difficulties accessing food and health care in particular. This situation calls for a paradigm shift in development aid.

Moving from short-term responses during periods of crisis to long-term integrated programs requires the sustained implementation of a range of measures and interventions aiming to build households' capacities and those of national structures. In its new strategy called the "[Agenda for Change](#)", the Commission presents possible ways to increase the impact of EU development policy. It is important to discuss with national and regional partners on how to translate this into effective action in the Sahel.

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¹ The seminar documents and a summary of the discussions are available from [ROSA's website](#).

² For more information, see the communication « [An EU policy framework to assist developing countries in addressing food security](#) » and the reference document « [Addressing undernutrition in external assistance. An integrated approach through sectors and aid modalities](#) ».

To this end, the EU has undertaken a process of strategic reflection on the role of social transfers within integrated food and nutrition security strategies. The Commission recently drafted a reference document that presents the basic concepts and field experiences, and encourages wider use of this type of instrument³. The aim of the Ouagadougou seminar was to discuss with partners the main points raised in the document and identify directions for the EC's future support in this area.

● **The use of social transfers in the Sahel is on the rise, but is still below its full potential to date. What lessons have been learned from experiences in the region, and what are the main challenges remaining to be overcome?**

Social transfers have great potential to ensure food and nutrition security in the Sahel where a large share of the population is consistently food insecure. Social transfers contribute to reduce deficits in food consumption of the poorest, protect them from shocks, and in some cases, strengthen their productive capacity. It is therefore important to examine the shift to wider use of social transfers in response to the chronic crisis that prevails in the Sahel.

Considerable progress has been made in recent years in the region. Many national and regional strategies now give a major role to social transfers. They are envisaged in a growing number of social protection, food security, and agricultural development strategies.

Several social transfer projects have been implemented, such as seasonal cash transfers, food vouchers, seed fairs, etc. These experiences made progress possible on technical aspects related to their use in the Sahelian context. Feasibility studies have also been conducted for the establishment of national social transfer programs on a multi-annual basis.

Nevertheless, considerable challenges remain to be overcome. First, national information and early warning systems need to be strengthened to ensure better understanding of the underlying causes and factors behind food and nutrition security (other factors than simply agricultural production and food prices). Early warning should make it possible to intervene prior to the crisis with prevention and mitigation policies. Second, the challenge of targeting must be addressed so that programs effectively reach the poorest and most vulnerable. Third, they must be scaled up. Most social transfers are currently implemented as limited projects, supported by international partners. The discussions revealed the importance of stepping up national consultation efforts by involving the populations more fully and of ensuring national funding, even minimal but increasing over the coming decade. Finally, complementary measures must be envisaged to enhance food and nutrition security, notably through improving markets and access to health care.

● **What are the main recommendations to emerge from the seminar in regard to expanding national social transfer systems in the Sahel?**

The participants first encouraged all actors to adopt a new paradigm for development in the Sahel, first by becoming fully aware of changes in the situation of the poor in the region (structural food and nutrition insecurity, recurrent crises, exclusion of the poor from productive cycles, high dependency on markets, etc.), and second by moving beyond the dichotomy between relief and development to envisage responses within long-term programmes. This must be led by national governments and contribute to reinforce resilience within multi-annual and multi-sector approaches.

Among the other recommendations issued for the establishment of effective, extensive and viable social transfer systems in the Sahel, the participants called in particular for:

i) strong leadership from governments to produce a national vision, and ensure the coordination and harmonisation of existing and future initiatives;

¹ In order to better support partner countries for the establishment of social transfer programs, the Commission has also recently set up an Advisory Service in Social Transfers (ASiST) managed by EuropeAid Unit C1.



- ii) **strengthening the role of regional organisations in advocacy** in favour of better use of social transfers in the fight against hunger and malnutrition (notably through policy dialogue with States); and
- iii) **better alignment of technical and financial partners** and **greater flexibility in development aid** to foster the establishment of multi-annual social transfer programs that can be adjusted in the case of crises.

The discussions and recommendations from this seminar will contribute to the Commission's strategic and operational reflections. The programming of the 11th EDF (European Development Fund) is a crucial stage in this regard, one that should enable the EU to take an ambitious position. In the Sahel, initiatives to extend social transfers are already underway and must receive coordinated support. Other experiences in social transfer programs, notably in East Africa, can also fuel the reflections underway in the Sahel. Sharing experiences is in this way a key element in successfully overcoming operational challenges and ensuring greater effectiveness, coverage and visibility for social transfer programs to improve resilience, food security and nutrition in the Sahel.

AGENDA



Past events

- **Public consultation on the Global Strategic Framework for food security and nutrition (12 March-15 May 2012)** : The First Draft of this document has been discussed at the FAO Regional Conferences (March-May 2012), and online through the Food Security and Nutrition Forum (12 March-15 May 2012). Comments and feedback will feed into the preparation of the second draft, which will be examined at a CFS consultation in Rome in June 2012, and eventually into the First Version of the GSF to be submitted to the October 2012 Plenary Session of the CFS. [>>>](#)
- **Meeting of the Food Crisis Prevention Network in the Sahel and West Africa (12-13 April 2012)**: Organised by the CILSS and the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat, under the auspices of the Commissions of ECOWAS and UEMOA. Participants highlighted that the role of the two regional organisations in managing the current food crisis in the Sahel has become much more prominent over the past few months. The creation of the "High-level committee on food security" by the UEMOA Commission and the adoption of the "RESOGEST" framework for co-operation" by ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS member countries, are two examples. [>>>](#)

Upcoming events

- 17 May**: G20 Agriculture Deputy Ministers work on strategies to strengthen food security [>>>](#)
- 13-15 June**: 3rd Preparatory Committee Meeting UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) - Rio (Brazil) [>>>](#)
- 18-19 June**: G20 Summit - Los Cabos (Mexico) [>>>](#)
- 20-22 June**: Rio+20 Summit - Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) [>>>](#)
- 27-29 June**: Meeting of the Intergovernmental working group of the Committee on World Food Security on the Global Strategic Framework for food security and nutrition (discussion on Draft 2) [>>>](#)
- 23 July**: Course on "Changing nutrition ideas, policy and outcomes" - Brighton (UK) [>>>](#)
- 15-20 October**: 38th session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) - Rome (Italy)

More information: [Upcoming events](#)

EC's latest news

- **Activities of the Nutrition Advisory Service (NAS) at the international level:**

Successful management of undernutrition worldwide requires both national and international efforts so as to ensure effective coherence and maximise the impact of collective resources. The work of the EC's Nutrition Advisory Service (NAS) spans both. This article briefly describes the involvement of the NAS in international processes⁴.

The NAS began work in 2009 with a focus on strengthening collaboration between the EC and the EU Member States (MS) on strategic, political and technical matters. The production of the EC Reference Document was a key achievement in this respect⁵. Collaboration with Member States has continued. The NAS has provided the EC and MS with support in examining ways to improve international coordination structures and mechanisms concerning nutrition. Concerted attention has been given to supporting the reforms of the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition, which have culminated in a much more focused structure for coordinating policies and priorities across UN agencies.

The NAS has also allowed EC strategic engagement with individual UN agencies. Most notable is the work with FAO on developing a Response Analysis Framework and the NAS contribution to the evaluation of FAO's role and work in nutrition.

The NAS recently participated in the *International Scientific Symposium on Food & Nutrition Security Information: From Valid Measurement to Effective Decision-Making* organised by FAO in January. It also participated in the pre-symposium special event *Strengthening Household Consumption and Expenditures Surveys to Enable More Evidence-Based Nutrition Policies*. These provided opportunities to draw relevant lessons for the work of the EC and NAS.

The most significant development in international nutrition over the last 3 years has been the emergence of the SUN Movement – Scaling Up Nutrition. Through the NAS, the EC has been able to play key roles in the SUN's governance, technical work (on indicators), and political positioning. The NAS and EuropeAid Unit C1 contributed to the SUN One-year Progress Report which was launched at senior-level meetings on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York in September 2011.

The NAS has continued to support the transition of the SUN Movement from its early ad hoc structures to more coherent mechanisms. It aims to enable effective international involvement and alignment to support progress at the national level. The EC support to the new governance arrangements amounts to €5 million over 3 years to help establish global systems and processes for the new Secretariat⁶.

EuropeAid Unit C1 is continuing to build on this involvement with the SUN Movement. The recent appointment of Commissioner Piebalgs to the SUN Leadership Group by the UN Secretary General further underscores the EC's continuing vital contribution (technical, financial and political) to nutrition at the international level.

- **External consultation paper on undernutrition in emergencies:** DG ECHO is in the process of reviewing and formalizing its approach to the Humanitarian Nutrition Sector. A document for consultation has been prepared to stimulate and inform reflection. This process will contribute to the preparation of an ECHO strategy for better addressing nutrition in emergency. [See the document >>>](#)

⁴ Its work with delegations was outlined in an article in ROSA Newsletter Number 35 (March 2012).

⁵ The preparation of the reference document benefited from input from representatives from Germany, Ireland, France, Poland and the United Kingdom, as well as various European Commission offices..

⁶ Substantive input from the NAS was provided in the elaboration of the Identification Fiche that outlines the EC's support to the SUN Movement. Work is currently underway to formulate the Action Fiche.

- **Negotiations on the European Union's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) (ongoing):** The discussions on the European Union's budget framework for 2014-2020 (the Multiannual Financial Framework, MFF) have entered a new phase: at its meeting on 26 March 2012 the General Affairs Council discussed for the first time a "negotiating box", that contains the most central issues and options. In April, the Member States will hold an orientation debate at the General Affairs Council meetings on the negotiating box, covering cohesion policy, the Connecting Europe Facility and "sustainable growth: natural resources and own resources". From May 2012 onwards, regular discussions will take place covering all aspects of the budget framework 2014-2020 in the Council preparatory bodies and at ministerial level. In June 2012, the European Council will discuss the negotiating box at its meeting scheduled for 28 and 29 June. >>>

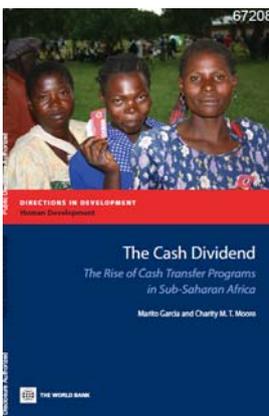


New online resources

Nutrition

- **Targeting for nutrition improvement. Resources for advancing nutritional well-being, FAO, 2011:** More a reference guide than a step-by-step manual, it provides a general introduction to the use, benefits and costs of targeting; a description of the six targeting schemes and the major advantages and disadvantages of each; a discussion of the main issues in the planning and design of a targeting scheme, including assessing costs and resources and selecting targeting criteria and indicators; information on monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of targeting in order to maximize programme impact; a description of the types of targeted programmes most commonly used to improve nutrition, highlighting special concerns for each of these programmes; and conclusions and suggestions for broad areas for action that will help to improve the targeting effectiveness of food and nutrition programmes. Case studies providing actual examples of various targeted food and nutrition programmes that have been implemented around the world are provided in the Annex. >>>

Social transfers



- **The cash dividend: The rise of cash transfer programs in Sub-Saharan Africa, World Bank, March 2012:** This book provides the results of an investigation of the recent use of cash transfer programs in Sub-Saharan Africa. The review was aimed toward understanding the evolution and current state of the programs, their intended uses, and the challenges associated with using cash transfer programs in the Sub-Saharan environment. The authors identified more than 120 cash transfer programs that have varying objectives, targeting, scale, conditions, technologies, and more. The book presents summary information on these programs and provides detailed reference material in the appendixes. The authors also discuss issues related to political economy. They highlight the importance of addressing key tradeoffs in cash transfers, political will, and buy-in, and they emphasize the need to build evidence-based debates on cash transfer programs. >>>

- **The productive role of safety nets, H. Alderman and R. Yemtsov, World Bank, March 2012:** This article is a background paper for the World Bank 2012–2022 Social Protection and Labor Strategy. The paper contains a framework for linking social protection with growth and productivity, an updated review of the literature, new original work filling in gaps in the available evidence, and a discussion of operational implications. The paper discusses operational implications for the design and implementation of SP programmes and proposes a work program for addressing knowledge gaps. >>>

- **Designing and implementing social transfer programs: A policy manual, EPRI, DFID, 2011:** The guide was written to assist government policymakers and donor agency officials in designing, implementing and managing cash-based social transfer programs. Topics covered include the role, definition and types of cash-based social transfers; how to select the appropriate social transfer instrument; how to assess the policy context and institutional framework; issues to consider in program design; and overviews of the main questions, evidence and debates around targeting and conditionalities >>>

- **Designing and implementing a rural safety net in a low income setting. Lessons learned from Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Program 2005–2009, World Bank, 2010:** This paper draws lessons learned from Ethiopia's Productive Safety Nets Program (PSNP), one of the largest social safety net program in Sub-Saharan Africa. The paper describes the context in Ethiopia that led to the launch of the PSNP in 2005, the design and operational mechanisms of the program, evidence of the impact and efficiency of the PSNP, and a number of thematic areas. Each section considers the design issues and trade-offs, followed by a reflection on implementation from 2005–2009 and concludes with a discussion of key lessons learned. Then the paper describes the current phase of the PSNP (2010–2014) and points to some issues that are key to the future of social protection in Ethiopia. Finally, the article identifies overarching lessons learned from the experience of the PSNP to date and concludes. >>>

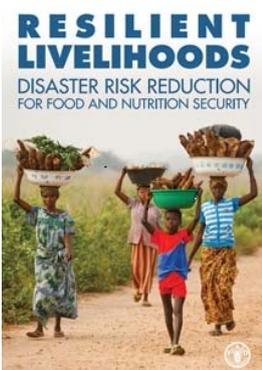
- **Cash transfers: Affordability and sustainability, Anna McCord, ODI, November 2009:** Drawing on case studies in Kenya, Malawi and Zambia, this paper explores the affordability and sustainability of providing cash transfers to alleviate poverty. The paper reviews cash transfer program coverage and costs, the fiscal implications of program extension to cover all eligible beneficiaries, the extent of national government resource allocation to cash transfers, the role of donor funding and perceptions of affordability and prospects for the sustainability of cash transfer programming. The case studies were part of a three-year study on cash transfers by ODI, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation. >>>

- **Conditional cash transfers. Reducing present and future poverty. World Bank, February 2009:** The report lays out a conceptual framework that considers the economic and political rationale for Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs). It reviews the evidence that has accumulated on CCTs, especially arising from impact evaluations. The report discusses how the conceptual framework and the evidence on impacts should inform the design of CCT programs in practice; and it considers where CCTs fit in the context of broader social policies. >>>

Other themes

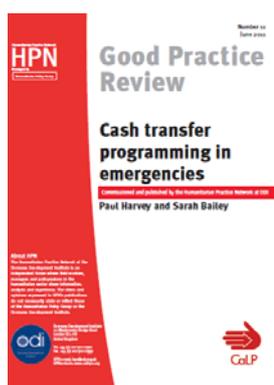
- **Disaster risk reduction: Spending where it should count, J. Kellett & D. Sparks, Global Humanitarian Assistance, March 2012:** This report examines the levels of donor investment in disaster risk reduction (DRR) in the top 40 humanitarian recipients over the last 10 years. The paper highlights how prevalent disasters are in these countries, and their particularly significant impact. Beyond this, the paper examines the current state of funding for DRR and, in the context of those countries most at risk of natural disaster, asks questions about the volume and type of funding, its equity, and whether it is being appropriately directed to meet needs. >>>

- **Resilient livelihoods. Disaster risk reduction for food and nutrition security, FAO, November 2011:** This brochure presents the FAO's interdisciplinary framework program on disaster risk reduction for food and nutrition security. It provides strategic direction to FAO member countries and partners for the implementation of disaster risk reduction measures in agriculture, forestry and fisheries at local, national, regional and global levels. >>>



- **Improving food security. A systematic review of the impact of interventions in agricultural production, value chains, market regulation, and land security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, IOB - December 2011:** The OECD Development Aid Committee (DAC) EvalNet meeting in 2010 expressed the need for a systematic review of recent evaluations and other research that would provide evidence-based information on successful approaches. The Netherlands, through its evaluation agency IOB, commissioned this study. 38 case studies were reviewed, nineteen of which referred to interventions aimed at increasing production as their main pathway. Of these nineteen, ten impacted through research and extension, four through irrigation, and five through input provision as the main strategy. >>>

External resources and links



- **Cash transfer programming in emergencies, Good Practice Review No11, June 2011, P. Harvey and S. Bailey, Humanitarian Practice Network:** This edition of Good Practice Review is intended primarily for humanitarian practitioners who plan and implement emergency responses – both those who are already familiar with cash-based interventions and those who are not. It synthesizes cash transfer guidelines, highlights lessons from evaluations and adds practical examples drawn from experience in the field. This publication is commissioned and published by the Humanitarian Practice Network at ODI in partnership with the [Cash Learning Partnership \(CaLP\)](#) with support from ECHO.

Read the publication: <http://www.odihpn.org/hpn-resources/good-practice-reviews/cash-transfer-programming-in-emergencies>

- **“The crisis in the Horn of Africa”, Humanitarian Practice Network, No 53 March 2012:** The special feature of this issue of Humanitarian Exchange, co-edited with research fellow Simon Levine, focuses on the crisis in the Horn of Africa. Debbie Hillier (Oxfam) argues in the lead article that the aid system overall needs to be reviewed, focusing on longer-term programs which build resilience, reducing the risk of crisis and the need for short-term life-saving interventions.

Read the publication: <http://www.odihpn.org/humanitarian-exchange-magazine/issue-53/the-crisis-in-the-horn-of-africa>

- **Nutrition courses:**

Monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment of food and nutrition security (4-22 June 2012, The Netherlands) : http://www.cdi.wur.nl/UK/newsagenda/agenda/Monitoring_evaluation_impact_assessment_of_food_and_nutrition_security.htm

Transforming nutrition ideas, policy and outcomes (23-27 July 2012, United Kingdom) : <http://www.ids.ac.uk/nutrition2012>

Programming for nutrition outcomes (on line course, London School for Hygiene and Tropical Medicine): <http://ble.lshtm.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=26>

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This bulletin was written by the GRET team in charge of animating ROSA.

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The points expressed do not reflect the official position of the European Commission.

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