**FAO and social protection**

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FAO is increasingly involved in policy, analytical and operational activities related to social protection. Social protection interventions can embody both aspects of FAO’s “twin track” approach to reducing hunger and poverty, by promoting livelihoods as well as providing direct and immediate support to fighting hunger. FAO’s comparative advantage lies in the interface between social protection, food security and agriculture in particular, and with livelihoods more generally. This comparative advantage stems from FAO’s expertise in rural and agricultural development, as well as its access to government and line Ministries related to rural development, and in particular agriculture. FAO has the potential to combine multiple entry points to social protection and to explore the synergies and trade-offs between agricultural, food security and nutritional objectives of programmes. FAO has endorsed the Social Protection Floor Initiative and considers the social protection pillar of the UN Decent Work Framework as crucial to its commitment to promote decent rural employment.

FAO is providing guidance and technical assistance to member countries along a variety of dimensions of social protection. These include, among others, the use of cash transfers in livestock emergencies, weather index and insurance schemes for smallholders and pastoralists, the linking of smallholder production with local procurement of school feeding, the linkages between social protection and support to small farmer development, social protection in the context of the Right to Food, and the review of how rights frameworks within national legal frameworks and international law enable social protection instruments to be framed as entitlements. The FAO and UNICEF are collaborating on regional study to understand the economic and productive impacts of cash transfer programs in Sub Saharan Africa.

One major area of FAO engagement in social protection is in the use of cash and voucher-based interventions, on which the FAO is currently developing corporate cash transfer policy and operational guidelines. FAO has experience, knowledge and comparative advantages in five types of cash transfer interventions: i) input trade fairs, which support market value chains by involving local producers to provide inputs; ii) Cash-for-Work (CFW), which provide cash to beneficiaries while at the same time strengthening their resilience by constructing and/or rehabilitating public/community assets that are important to agricultural, livestock, fishery and forestry production; iii) destocking and re-stocking in times of crisis, as livestock that are likely to perish remain a potential asset for their owners and can be converted into cash; iv) unconditional cash transfers, in exceptional circumstances, in order to alleviate severe nutritional stress so that communities are able to later start working again; and v) vouchers for inputs, which facilitate access by the most rural vulnerable to agricultural inputs from local suppliers and traders.

FAO’s work in social protection is developed and implemented in close collaboration with other UN agencies, in particular UNICEF, the World Bank, ILO and WFP.