

Adaptation and response for children affected by droughts and disasters



How national social protection systems are responding to El Niño in Eastern and Southern Africa, *with a particular focus on Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe*

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Front cover photo: Two women travelling with drinking water they've just collected after the recent drought in Ethiopia. In December 2015, as a result of the worsening food crisis in Ethiopia caused by a severe drought related to El Nino, the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) and humanitarian partners officially launched a humanitarian response plan in 2016 © Kyle Degraw/Save the Children

Back cover photo: A child helps to collect water. In December 2015, as a result of the worsening food crisis in Ethiopia caused by a severe drought related to El Nino, the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) and humanitarian partners officially launched a humanitarian response plan for 2016. © Kyle Degraw/Save the Children

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On 28 June 2016, Alinafe stands with her youngest daughter, Desire, 2, in their dry and barren field in Balaka district in Malawi.

Foreword

The 2015/16 El Niño phenomenon recorded high temperatures and the lowest rainfall in 35 years, leading to severe drought conditions across Eastern and Southern Africa. Millions of families across the region struggled to meet basic food and nutrition requirements. As unprecedented climactic conditions strained traditional systems of social support and tested response capacities, livelihoods were lost and huge numbers of children dropped out of school.

For UNICEF and Save the Children, the 2015/16 El Niño-induced drought was a stark reminder of the harsh effects of climate extremes on children and their families. However, the drought also reinforced for both agencies the transformative capacity of social protection in times of crisis. It served to underline the essential role that well-designed, shock-responsive social protection systems can play in a rapid response to slow-onset shocks, providing coordinated and large-scale responses to reach at-risk populations.

While social protection is now globally recognised as a leading strategic response to chronic poverty and vulnerability, this paper was borne out of the need to ascertain how national governments and partners in Eastern and Southern Africa adapted existing social protection systems and programmes to alleviate poverty and deprivation and build resilience during an acute shock.

As we launch this report ***“Adaptation and response for children affected by droughts and disasters: How national social protection systems are responding to El Niño in Eastern and Southern Africa,”*** drought is once again foremost on our minds.

Successive cycles of short rains and crop failures, exacerbated by conflict, have in the first few months of 2017 left over 28 million people across Somalia, South Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia at risk of food insecurity, malnutrition, opportunistic infections, and displacement. As such, there remains an urgent need for more and better information on how to adapt social protection systems to respond to shocks.

Using case studies from Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, this report highlights how in some countries in Eastern and Southern Africa, as elsewhere on the continent, national social protection systems are emerging as a strong force in mitigating the impact of drought, protecting families and children from famine, and enabling faster recovery. In countries where social protection systems are not in place or ready to provide a

scalable response, humanitarian and development partners are stepping up efforts to provide essential support to vulnerable households.

In both cases, the lessons found in this report – from the need for coordinated, child-sensitive programme design and responses to the importance of building and buffering national social protection systems; from the focus on predictable financing to the need for stronger data on and from those who are most vulnerable – provide a valuable resource for government and partners to support an effective, integrated response.

Moreover, the report reminds us that building or strengthening equitable and scalable social protection systems *prior* to an emergency is critical to help prevent a shock from becoming a disaster. The paper also reinforces what we already know: Humanitarian responses which buttress, rather than undermine, national social protection systems are key. Building on social protection systems, such responses protect vulnerable children and families from harmful coping strategies.

We hope that the practical guidance found in this report will resonate with policymakers and development partners, and will help to ensure a more effective response and a faster, more lasting recovery for children and their families.

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and Save the Children have been at the forefront of responding to both man-made and natural humanitarian emergencies across Eastern and Southern Africa, and continue leading efforts to harness emerging evidence to support the effective design of social protection systems, and mitigate the adverse impacts of humanitarian disasters on women and children. We would like to thank all partners, and in particular the Food and Agricultural Organization, for their valuable contributions to this report.



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Executive Summary

Weather-related stresses associated with El Niño in 2015–2016 have severely impacted 60 million people. Governments across the globe are dealing with the consequences as they affect food security, livelihoods, and the well-being of their populations. Several of the hardest hit areas are in Eastern and Southern Africa, where drought affects countries already struggling with changing climate and weather patterns and chronic vulnerability, including poverty and food insecurity. The effects of El Niño will continue to exacerbate malnutrition, livelihood loss and poverty for months to come.

Social protection is a leading strategic response to chronic poverty and vulnerability; its key role in supporting development has been recognized in the Sustainable Development Goals. Social protection systems are proven to be an efficient and cost-effective means of reaching the most vulnerable households – a functionality that may be used both as a means to support those living in chronic poverty as well as at times of crisis.

This review was commissioned by UNICEF and Save the Children, with support from FAO, to provide an overview of how national governments and partners in countries in Eastern and Southern Africa are adapting existing social protection systems to respond to shocks. The study looks in particular at how social protection systems support children and families in the context of the El Niño response, with a focus on 5 countries: Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

In the majority of cases, existing social protection systems have played an important role in the El Niño response, whether through top-ups for beneficiaries within existing social cash transfer programmes, or extending the programmes to additional beneficiaries as a response to the impacts of El Niño. Many countries have also undertaken efforts to strengthen resilience to future shocks.

However, significant challenges remain. While the role of social protection systems in reaching populations quickly during shocks cannot be overestimated, current systems in countries of Eastern and Southern Africa are limited in size and scope, and often underfunded. In all five countries studied, national social protection and information management systems have had only partial reach, thus restricting their response capacity. Coordination and leadership have also posed challenges, with humanitarian cash transfer programmes being set up in parallel to existing social protection programmes in some instances.

Making social protection shock-responsive continues to necessitate significant technical improvement and investment, and there is an urgent need to foster wider understanding and consensus on the place of social protection in humanitarian action. This review provides practical recommendations for all stakeholders to improve the effectiveness and impact of shock-responsive social protection programming in Eastern and Southern Africa.

Background

The 2015/2016 El Niño in Eastern and Southern Africa

Between October 2015 and July 2016, El Niño conditions¹ exacerbated by climate change brought drought and weather-related stress to countries around the world, severely impacting 60 million people. The year 2016 was the hottest on record and parts of Eastern and Southern Africa have experienced the lowest recorded rainfall for more than 35 years. The 2015–2016 harvest was insufficient to cover full food needs in the region without external assistance², and the recovery period is likely to stretch beyond 2017.

Among the countries experiencing the greatest stress in the region³ are: Ethiopia (with 10.2 million people classified as food insecure⁴), Somalia (4.7 million people food insecure, and a possibility of famine in 2017), Sudan (4.6 million people food insecure due to both El Niño and conflict), and countries in Southern Africa, including Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Secretariat has announced that an estimated 41 million people – 23 per cent of the rural population of 181 million in the region – are food insecure.

Drought caused by El Niño is impacting countries already struggling with the challenge of changing weather patterns, as well as other areas of chronic vulnerability. Lesotho, for example, has experienced three successive crop failures due to poor rainfall, and enters this period with high levels of existing food

insecurity, with approximately 24 per cent of the rural population already food insecure in 2015.

Even as the El Niño comes to an end, its effects linger, and will continue to exacerbate malnutrition, livelihood erosion and poverty for many months to come. The ongoing needs of affected populations – likely to be amplified by the predicted impact of the La Niña event to follow – present a real-time challenge for stakeholders to make prevention and response actions more accurate, timely, efficient, well-targeted and effective. Adaptation of social protection systems in countries experiencing frequent, predictable and often slow-onset shocks is a crucial part of the solution.

Prevention, mitigation and response: the role of national social protection systems in addressing the impact of El Niño

Social protection is now recognized as a leading strategic response to chronic poverty and vulnerability by governments, relief and development organizations and donors all over the world. Over 1.9 billion people benefit from social protection in 136 countries, including more than 700 million who are enrolled in cash transfer programmes.⁵ The key role of social protection in the new global development agenda is reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals.⁶

Increasingly, driven by principles of social inclusion, equity, and non-discrimination, social protection is viewed as a right.

There is a significant and growing synergy between social protection and humanitarian assistance.⁷ In many of the countries in Eastern and Southern Africa, governments are faced with the twin challenges of a high percentage of the population dependent on rural livelihoods, and rapid and unplanned urbanization. These populations are often subject to chronic poverty, and covariate shocks such as El Niño are a significant cause of long-term sustained food insecurity, particularly for the rural poor.⁸ National governments are looking for a range of longer-term solutions to the enduring challenge of climate change, as well as a mechanism which can act as an immediate response to crises. Social protection, and in particular social cash transfers, can offer an alternative to expensive and unsustainable cycles of humanitarian aid, and has been proven as an effective tool in reducing vulnerability to cyclical, slow-onset emergencies⁹.

Social protection has particular significance for children. Most social protection systems are set up to support the poorest, and children are overrepresented among the poor: more than half of the 1 billion people living on under US\$1.25 a day are under 18.¹⁰ A childhood in poverty can have irreversible effects for a lifetime. The deprivation and exclusion linked to poverty is associated with higher child mortality, lower educational attainment, and greater exposure to protection threats.¹¹ Social protection policy and programming need to be assessed in light of their capacity to mitigate the multi-dimensional impacts of poverty on children¹² and their ability to make a real impact to end the intergenerational cycle of poverty and deprivation.

The area of social protection is achieving global traction; greater use of cash-based assistance in building resilience, preventing emergencies, and in humanitarian response was agreed as part of the 'Grand Bargain' by governments and donors at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. Social protection was also flagged as a cornerstone of efforts to bridge the humanitarian–development divide. As part of this, governments have agreed to develop standard operating procedures for preparedness, and to strengthen resilience among the most vulnerable populations, including through social protection mechanisms.



Water Point, Lode Lamhffo Kabele, Sire Woreda, Arsi Zone. Since the UNICEF-supported pump was installed two weeks ago, life has changed dramatically. Before children were travelling three hours to get water, and were therefore unable to attend school. Many children were sickened by dirty river water.

Objectives, scope and methodology of the study

This review was commissioned by UNICEF and Save the Children, with support from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), to provide an overview of how national governments and partners in countries of Eastern and Southern Africa are adapting existing social protection systems and programmes to alleviate poverty and deprivation and build resilience to El Niño and other shocks.

The methodology included a review of recent literature on shock-responsive social protection and developments in the region, with a focus on the response in 5 case-study countries: Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Field visits were conducted to Lesotho and Ethiopia, while inputs from Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe were obtained by email and telephone. The paper pays particular attention to how social protection systems are protecting the rights and well-being of children in the context of El Niño, and how such systems could be improved.

In Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, among other countries affected by El Niño, national Governments have made efforts to sustain or expand the reach and resources of existing social protection systems as part of the humanitarian effort to address El Niño – with varying degrees of success. This paper examines the role of national social protection programmes in the context of the El Niño response, highlighting good practice and key challenges in building effective shock-responsive and child-sensitive social protection systems.

Learning from recent droughts and other shocks in Eastern and Southern Africa – Lessons for the El Niño response

Before presenting an overview of the successes and challenges for national social protection systems in the context of the El Niño response in the 5 case study countries, this paper will briefly lay out some features of shock-responsive social protection interventions implemented in humanitarian emergencies in the region in recent years as a broad contextual framework for interpreting the current response.

The list below includes some key features of effective social protection programmes.

Vertical and horizontal expansion of safety nets in times of shock

In slow-onset emergencies, existing household-level cash transfer systems can provide a quick and cost-efficient way to reach impacted populations. This is particularly true in the case of covariate shocks – shocks that affect whole communities at a time – especially those similar in nature to existing stresses affecting households eligible for routine transfers.¹³ Social protection mechanisms are targeted to reach the most vulnerable, and it is likely that existing recipients will also be affected by additional shocks affecting their communities, such as drought. In such cases, the size or frequency of the cash transfer may be temporarily increased to support recipients to purchase food amid rising market prices, and to meet other challenges brought on by the emergency situation. This kind of vertical expansion supports

households to meet basic needs, and helps to avoid resorting to negative coping strategies, which may adversely affect children, e.g. by taking children out of school to work to contribute to family income.

Simultaneously, shocks like drought can affect a wider population, and effective social protection systems may need to have the capacity to expand *horizontally* to cover a larger number of families in need of temporary support.

Ideally, national social protection systems would have rapid vertical and horizontal expansion capabilities built in at the design stage to minimize the need to tweak or refit the system while the emergency response is underway.

Child-sensitive monitoring and impact assessment

Whether or not a social protection programme directly targets its efforts towards children, it is important to ensure that outcomes and impacts for children are measured – both in terms of expected benefits and any negative impacts. This can be achieved by integrating robust child-sensitive monitoring and evaluation mechanisms into the design of the programme from the outset and creating or strengthening national and local monitoring and feedback systems with child-focused indicators providing both quantitative and qualitative data. These systems should also draw directly on regular feedback including the views of children and caregivers themselves. A programme can

only adapt and innovate to benefit children if knowledge is available on its positive and negative impacts on children. Investment in reliable data gathering, analysis and sharing of best practice between countries is also very important.

Linking social protection with social services for children

When social protection programmes are scaled up in times of shock, there are opportunities for governments and partner agencies, including community-level organizations, to promote stronger linkages between those and social services for children, such as child protection services and efforts to support retention in education. Child protection risks – of violence, exploitation, neglect and abuse – may increase in times of stress, and social protection can play an important role in protecting children by addressing against the very vulnerabilities that place them at greater risk.¹⁴ Holistic social protection systems should include links between social service outreach and the coverage of cash transfer systems.

Risk financing – timely and adequate resources

In almost every country in Eastern and Southern Africa, humanitarian response efforts, and frequently also social protection systems, are largely dependent on external financial support from donors. For many years, the ad hoc appeals system, activated only once a shock has turned into an emergency, has been used to generate foreign assistance, yet this approach is neither timely nor equitable. In the interim, human lives may be lost, family assets sold or depleted, and harmful coping strategies impacting children may be deployed, while vital development gains of past years are reversed.

Even from a purely economic perspective, reacting late is poor practice: a DFID study shows that adopting an early response and resilience-building approach can bring significant cost savings.¹⁵ Reflecting this logic, agreed global priorities in the context of the SDGs include addressing the causes of instability and disaster, investing in prevention and resilience-building with multi-year and predictable funding for preparedness and response to drought and other shocks, and developing national first responder capacity.¹⁶ With their emphasis on preparedness,

flexibility, cost-efficient early action, and investment in long-term resilience, social protection systems present an opportunity to put these principles into practice.

Drought-prone middle-income countries, and those approaching middle-income status, can benefit from an increasing number of options to offset the huge cost of dealing with the consequences of an adverse event. Such risk-transfer mechanisms, which include micro-insurance, index-based insurance, and private-sector risk financing,¹⁷ may present an alternative to the lengthy and unreliable donor appeal process, and help smooth annual fiscal outlays.

Better data, early warning and early action: good triggers, acting with conviction

Timeliness is crucial for an effective humanitarian response, as it is for effective social protection of children and other vulnerable populations.¹⁸ At the same time, the importance of early warning and early action is often overlooked even for predicted crises, such as El Niño.

Better data may be part of the solution. One of the major challenges in the area of early action is reluctance to expend scarce financial resources on an intervention that may prove unnecessary. At the same time, preventive programming has been conclusively proven to be less costly than humanitarian response¹⁹, and governments should be encouraged to take a no-regrets approach to scaling up support to vulnerable populations *in advance* of a crisis. An important factor in rendering an early warning system effective is consensus around the objective, empirical indicators, and trigger points for action. The Vegetation Condition Index (VCI) which is used as a trigger for the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) in Kenya is an interesting example of this.²⁰

Transparent targeting and verification system

Sound targeting is a crucial feature of a good cash transfer system, not only because reaching the poorest increases the overall effectiveness of the transfer, but also because effective targeting reduces the likelihood of community dissatisfaction, complaints and suspicions of political or other bias. Fair and efficient targeting respects the basic social protection principle of inclusivity, providing support to those who need it



On 9 February 2016 in central Ethiopia, children and women from a semi-pastoralist community wait their turn to fill jerrycans with clean water at a water point in Haro Huba Kebele in Fantale Woreda, in East Shoa Zone, Oromia Region.

most. Ensuring community participation in some aspect of the targeting process ensures decisions to include or exclude households are made with endorsement of the communities themselves.

Innovation in delivery: opportunities for scalability

Modern communication technologies expanding across the continent increase the range of options policy-makers have when choosing social protection or humanitarian cash transfer payment modalities to reach populations even in remote areas. Electronic money transfers have a number of advantages: they are more secure, as they remove the need to transport large amounts of cash; they remove the requirement for recipients to queue for cash, and any accompanying stigma; they are less costly and more transparent; and they make it easier to carry out more regular, and more predictable, transfers. Furthermore, electronic transfers are more readily scalable in case of emergency. Transferring cash electronically to mobile phones or bank accounts is also an important step on the path to financial inclusion for the poorest, as it brings recipients into contact with financial institutions, which may lead to opportunities to encourage saving, borrowing, and entrepreneurship.²¹ The Kenyan HSNP has had significant success in this area.

Coordination

Long recognized as a key aspect of good humanitarian and development policy, coordination and information sharing nevertheless remains one of the most elusive features of a multi-party response, particularly in an emergency.

Effective shock-responsive social protection systems rely on good coordination and information sharing between social protection, disaster risk management, and humanitarian response sectors and effective leadership by the national government²². Navigating the sensitivities of different mandates, ministry territory, fragmented funding agendas, corporate and individual intransigence and the allure of working in silos has proven a difficult challenge.

Building resilience

Resilience-building includes activities that support the ability of people, communities or systems that are confronted by disasters or crises to withstand damage and to recover rapidly.²³ Nearly all national social protection systems now include components of livelihood support or resilience-building, or are closely linked with such programmes. Resilience interventions can include a focus on strengthening and/or diversifying livelihoods and preparing households and communities for shocks such as drought before they occur. This is often true in rural communities, as 80 per cent of damage done by drought is to crops, livestock and other aspects of agricultural livelihoods.²⁴

There is growing consensus that building resilience should be a priority in shock-prone countries, yet the concept remains difficult to measure.²⁵ The popularity of Cash Plus (CASH+) programmes has grown in recent years. This approach links complementary multi-sectoral interventions to cash transfers in order to address different dimensions of poverty simultaneously, with the hope that this will create greater benefits than separate interventions thanks to the multiplier effect.

Case studies

CASE STUDY: ETHIOPIA The Productive Safety Nets Programme

Ethiopia's Productive Safety Nets Programme (PSNP) was established in 2005 in response to the country's chronic food insecurity and cycles of emergency, and as part of an effort to meet national Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets. When the safety net entered Phase 4 in 2015, it was adapted based in part on learning from the 2011 crisis in the Horn of Africa region. This adaptation allowed PSNP to contribute to the Government of Ethiopia's Growth and Transformation Plan, linked with other multi-sectoral interventions, and to ensure a more clear relationship with Ethiopia's humanitarian response to periodic drought and other shocks.

Scaling up in emergencies

The current El Niño crisis, the most severe in three decades in Ethiopia, has affected as many as 19 million people, including more than 10 million children. In response, an estimated 7 million people among those eligible for PSNP transfers and who were identified as particularly vulnerable to shocks started to receive their monthly transfers in November 2015, two months earlier than usual. The reach of the PSNP was also extended from 7.1 million to 7.9 million beneficiaries in 318 districts in January and February 2016. Thanks to its adaptive capacity, the PSNP is a good example of how an established social protection

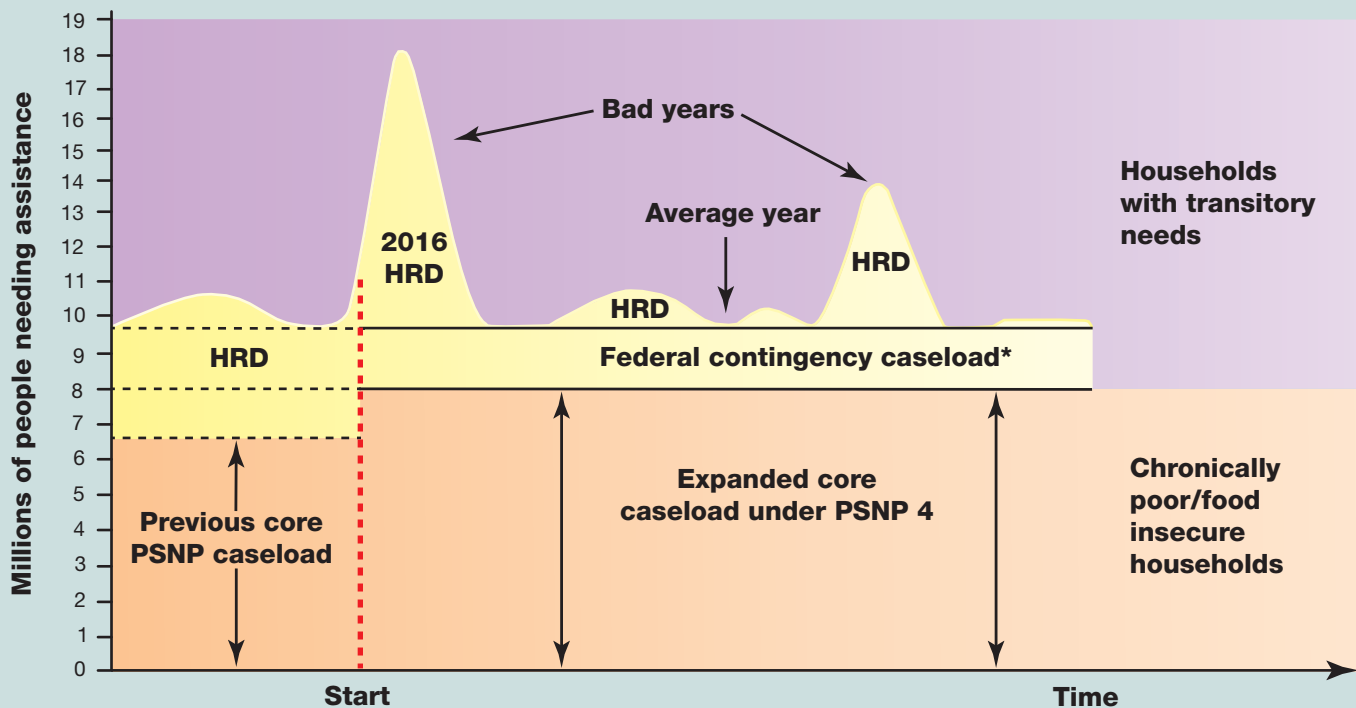
system can effectively contribute to a nationwide humanitarian response, even when additional emergency interventions are needed to cover gaps in PSNP coverage.

While it was not possible to expand PSNP to households in additional districts at the time of the 2015-16 El Niño response due to funding constraints, national coverage continues to be a priority for the future, and this safety net is seen as an important component of the humanitarian response to allow for accelerated and universal horizontal scale-up to address future shocks.

Integrating cash transfers with social service provision for women and children

The Productive Safety Nets Programme is one of the longest-standing social protection systems in the region. The PSNP continues to evolve in its design and reach to incorporate lessons learned and to address new challenges. Phase 4 is designed to be more child-sensitive and more linked to social service community outreach activities for women and children, particularly in the area of nutrition.

Despite the gains made in food security in recent years, thanks in part to the impact of the PSNP, child undernutrition continues to remain a significant



UNICEF Ethiopia Country Office presentation, ESARO, June 2016

challenge in Ethiopia, with national stunting prevalence at 40 per cent²⁶. To improve nutritional outcomes for children, in 2015 the Ministries of Agriculture, Health, Labour and Social Affairs launched a pilot programme to reinforce strategic links between the PSNP and the National Nutrition Programme in 4 districts. There are also stronger links to improved monitoring and support of education and child protection outcomes in these districts. The pilot's soft conditionalities aim to promote health-seeking behaviours, encouraging participants to access health and nutrition information and services such as antenatal care, postnatal care, and immunization. Health Extension Workers and social workers are now able to refer households with malnourished children to the PSNP for inclusion as transitory direct beneficiaries; e.g., non-PSNP beneficiaries who are included temporarily during treatment of malnourished children.

PSNP Phase 4 is designed to be more integrated in a comprehensive national social protection system, with a focus on mothers and children and prevention of malnutrition. The scale-up of the PSNP and humanitarian efforts in the context of the El Niño response will provide an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the current system in times of emergencies. This will be a chance to identify challenges in the system of registration, monitoring

and data management; ascertain gaps in capacity of social workers and in communication at community level; and find out whether the system is effective at reaching households with children affected by severe acute malnutrition (SAM) and moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) at times of crisis.

Risk financing

In 2009, PSNP Phase 2 established a Risk Financing Mechanism (RFM) as the need for emergency funds had become increasingly regular. When the Mechanism was triggered in 2011, the cash transfer was successfully increased for 6.5 million existing beneficiaries, and an additional 3.1 million people were reached. Thanks to the RFM, beneficiaries received transfers 4 months sooner than those who benefitted from the parallel humanitarian appeal.²⁷

At the same time, some challenges remain. For instance, in 2011, the RFM was triggered late, and in 2012 and 2013, not at all; there was lack of clarity in some districts on the difference between the RFM and humanitarian food packages; and the humanitarian food package proved to be more generous than the cash transfer. In addition, some officials were reluctant to spend funds on the assumption a reserve needed to be kept in case of further deterioration in the situation the following year.²⁸



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Hassen is a father of nine who was born and raised in Denkarone in Sitti Zone, Somali region. His family are pastoralists, and before the drought had forty eight animals comprising forty goats and eight cows. When this photo was taken in February 2016 he only had four cows remain alive. He is also the chairman of the community's water management committee, which was put in place to ensure the fair distribution of the water that is trucked into the community every day. *name changed to protect identity.*

Steps have been taken to address outstanding issues with the PSNP contingency funding mechanism. In 2015, the Government and donors agreed on a programmed federal contingency budget of US\$50 million per year. This budget, housed in the Ministry of Finance, has been set aside for the purpose of an annual transfer to households that become food insecure due to shocks, as well as additional payment rounds for the base PSNP caseload of chronically food insecure households. Resources are allocated on a 'use it or lose it' basis to remove the incentive to retain the funds.²⁹ There have also been efforts to make the size of the PSNP transfer and the humanitarian food basket comparable. The above efforts are complemented by a DRM Policy and Woreda Disaster Risk Profiling (WDRP) initiatives – two new elements strengthening early warning capacity in the country.³⁰

Coordination

The Government of Ethiopia provides strong oversight of the PSNP, and there is little risk of parallel support systems being introduced. Donor activities in support of the PSNP are well coordinated, with funds channelled through the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. The approach supports Government accountability, as each tranche of funds is linked to satisfactory quarterly financial reports presented to the Donor Coordination Team.³¹

It is worth mentioning that Ethiopia's response to the 2015/16 drought associated with El Niño was affected by the introduction in mid-2015 of new coordination structures governing the humanitarian and social protection sectors. Oversight of the disaster risk response mechanism and the PSNP have now been formally separated, with a newly named National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC) in the Office of the Prime Minister still responsible for the former while the Ministry of Agriculture continues to oversee the latter. This change in institutional oversight and new modalities for PSNP Phase 4 are being tested at the time of the most severe drought to affect the country for decades, making it doubly difficult to provide the 'continuum of response' described in the design documents guiding PSNP Phase 4.³² New PSNP Phase 4 provisions allowing households with malnourished children to become transitory direct beneficiaries are still not widely known or understood, undermining the efficacy of the referral mechanisms and, by extension, the effectiveness of efforts to address child malnutrition through PSNP.

The National Social Protection Policy (NSPP) describes a number of institutional arrangements to improve coordination of the social protection sector, including a registry for all potentially chronically food-insecure households. This tool may prove useful for temporarily extending the PSNP to households that are affected by shocks. The development of strong management information and referral systems, as well as a focus on training and communication to Health Extension Workers and other frontline staff, will also be an area for focus to improve the nutrition impacts of PSNP going forward.

CASE STUDY: LESOTHO

The Child Grants Programme (CGP)

The Child Grants Programme (CGP) in Lesotho is an unconditional cash transfer safety net which reaches 26,681 households, responding to the needs of approximately 70,000 children. The CGP was established to address chronic vulnerabilities affecting children in poverty; it targets the poorest households with children. The CGP was also one of several mechanisms being used to reach vulnerable populations affected by the 2015/16 current El Niño emergency in Lesotho.

Scaling up in emergencies

The CGP has proven to be responsive to shocks in recent years. For example, in 2012, when many CGP beneficiaries were significantly affected by drought, the safety net was expanded both vertically (increasing the size of the transfer) and horizontally (reaching more beneficiaries).³³ In the context of the 2015/16 El Niño response, existing CGP beneficiaries received top-up transfers, and the programme expanded to 6,000 new households in 10 community councils.³⁴ Given the limited reach of the CGP, the safety net worked alongside a number of other interventions to fully address the humanitarian needs of all El Niño-affected populations in the country.

Targeting

Effective targeting to ensure that cash transfers reach households in greatest need is critical both for regular safety net support and at times of emergency. The targeting of the Child Grants Programme was originally based on census data, using a means-testing proxy to identify eligible households in a given community; this selection was then validated by community officials. When this methodology was extensively evaluated in 2014³⁵, numerous inclusion and exclusion errors were identified, and a revised targeting process was recommended. The new hybrid methodology uses community selection of participants as the primary targeting mechanism. This selection is then refined using proxy means testing to address inclusion errors; a robust complaints mechanism helps address exclusion errors. The new methodology is being used to identify new households for the programme and to validate existing lists in the National Information System for Social Assistance (NISSA).

A similar community-based targeting mechanism was used by humanitarian actors in the context of the El Niño response to find those households which were most affected by the drought and provide a separate transfer (not a top-up). Relying on the community to identify those who are in greatest need seems to be effective. Monitoring data showed that among several hundred households across 6 community councils where both the CGP and emergency cash interventions were being administered, only one household received transfers from both sources.

Transfer size

Harmonizing the size of the transfer has been much more difficult. The humanitarian transfer is approximately three times the value of the CGP even with the emergency top-up, meaning that neighbouring households in broadly similar circumstances may be receiving very different levels of assistance – a far from optimal outcome. Some donors are calling for this to be urgently rectified, and for transfers to be better harmonized in future responses.

Coordination and information management

Since 2007, UNICEF and the European Union (EU) have been supporting the Ministry of Social Development in developing its National Information System for Social Assistance, a single data platform for targeting beneficiaries of the Child Grants Programme. The vision was for this information system to become a single integrated national registry for all social protection programmes, with the possibility of it also being used for swift, coordinated scaling up in the context of humanitarian emergencies.

While NISSA has a database of profiles of some of the poorest households in the country, as well as infrastructure through which humanitarian cash transfers could be delivered countrywide in emergencies, the reach of the Child Grants Programme is limited, as it is administered in only 36 of the 67 community councils in the 10 districts of Lesotho. There is limited confidence among humanitarian agencies that the information contained



© Stuart Sia/Save the Children

People from Denkarone and surrounding areas fill their containers with precious water delivered by Save the Children after drought hit Ethiopia. Some are bringing their donkeys and camels to help carry their containers of water.

In NISSA is current, accurate and universal as household composition is likely to have changed since the data was collected in 2012.

In light of this, during the 2015/2016 El Niño response, humanitarian actors chose to rely on their own targeting for cash and food transfers in Lesotho – both in councils covered and those not covered by NISSA. This is testimony to the fact that the social protection sector has not been able to provide effective coordination or leadership, and remains only one part of a wider humanitarian response. The Government of Lesotho has not invested any of its humanitarian response budget in expanding the Child Grants Programme or other safety nets. While a shared database may be useful for future interventions, this has not been the role of NISSA in the 2015/2016 El Niño response.

Next steps include harmonizing NISSA databases, expanding the system to all community councils, and recertifying included households, a process that is likely to take approximately 2 years. Funding remains a significant constraint in an environment where even the humanitarian appeal for immediate lifesaving

interventions was significantly underfunded. Mobilizing support for the longer-term task of building a comprehensive social protection database has proven difficult during this time of emergency. Nevertheless, discussions are ongoing between the Ministry and donors including DFID and the EU. This process should be given strategic priority as an outcome for both a resilience-building and humanitarian response.

Resilience-building; beyond the safety net

The 2014 evaluation of the Child Grants Programme found that it was not successful in helping household members ‘graduate’ out of poverty. Interviews with beneficiaries suggest that the limited impact of this cash transfer on areas such as savings, consumption smoothing, accessing services and developing new livelihood strategies was partly due to the small size of the transfer and irregular or insufficiently frequent payments,³⁶.

In 2015, with UNICEF support, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) began a resilience-building programme targeting CGP beneficiaries. The programme provides seeds, tools and training to develop small keyhole gardens to support nutritional diversity. CRS also provides training for a savings-led microfinance project to enable community members to form their own savings groups and to invest funds in small businesses of their own. In addition, Government outreach workers bring health and child protection services to the communities. While the programme is expanding and forming links with other social assistance programmes, the CGP has proven a good starting point to reach the poorest households in many districts of Lesotho.

FAO is increasingly investing in programmes that provide training, seeds and other inputs to complement cash as part of existing social protection programmes³⁷. As part of the Food Security to Social Protection programme, the links between agricultural programmes and social protection have been strengthened as food prices rise. FAO is supporting Ministry of Agriculture extension workers to reach 27,000 households which receive cash grants with seeds and training on homestead gardening. This includes both households included in the national social protection registry lists for the Child Grants Programme, and additional households supported by WFP in districts not reached by the CGP. This effort is proving particularly effective for labour-constrained households.³⁸

CASE STUDY: MALAWI

The Social Cash Transfer Programme (SCTP)

The Social Cash Transfer Programme (SCTP) was set up in 2006 as part of a long-term poverty alleviation strategy targeting the poorest and most labour-constrained households in Malawi. The programme provides monthly or bi-monthly cash transfers to the most vulnerable tenth of the population. It is currently operational in 18 of the country's 28 districts and is being extended nationwide this year (2017). The programme is executed by District Councils under national leadership by the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, and policy and design oversight by the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development. Implementation is supported by a number of development partners.

Scaling up in emergencies

The Government of Malawi declared a national drought emergency in response to the 2015–2016 El Niño. According to the Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC), 6.69 million people were identified as food insecure and in urgent need of humanitarian assistance in 24 districts.^{39,40} This is reflected in the rise in the number of children under 5 years of age who are receiving treatment for wasting – low weight for height – which is a measure of malnutrition. Effects of the El Niño drought extend beyond nutrition. The crisis has affected 42 per cent of primary schools in Malawi, forcing over 137,000 children to drop out of school.⁴¹

The Government and humanitarian agencies have been using cash based transfers as part of the response to reach people in need. Thanks to continued efforts, Malawi has made important strides in developing an integrated social protection and humanitarian response, as described below.⁴²

Targeting

SCTP beneficiaries have been identified by the community as ultra-poor and labour-constrained households in need of support. Their level of poverty makes them among the groups most exposed to and suffering the most from shocks, including drought. They are least likely to be able to withstand shocks without resorting to negative coping mechanisms. Consequently and based on findings of the high levels of exclusion errors in the targeting of MVAC

humanitarian assistance among SCTP beneficiaries, a policy decision was reached at The Humanitarian Response Committee (HRC) meeting on 20 June 2016 to automatically include all SCTP recipients of affected districts in the MVAC response caseload for 2016-2017. It was also agreed that SCTP beneficiaries should receive full rations, be it cash-based or food-based, in line with other MVAC beneficiaries. This was a policy decision in response to the standard practice of excluding SCTP beneficiaries from additional support during shocks in order to spread benefits more evenly.

The decision to automatically include SCTP beneficiaries, which continues to encounter resistance when proposed as a longer term inclusion of SCTP beneficiaries in the humanitarian caseload, was made in light of the fact that the value of the humanitarian transfer response at household level is approximately five times that of the SCTP transfer; that gains made under the SCTP programme thus far are significant but fragile and that to exclude vulnerable households from an important humanitarian response would risk causing harm and eroding progress; and that the two programmes have different objectives, with the SCTP addressing chronic poverty, and the humanitarian response focusing on acute food insecurity. An alternative proposal was for the El Niño response to provide the value of a full El Niño humanitarian ration minus the SCTP transfer amount. However, this would have meant the SCTP would subsidize the humanitarian response, blurring the distinction between these programmes. A review of the inclusion of the SCTP caseload in the humanitarian response is currently underway, to derive lessons to feed into the next response cycle. The review will consider options for continuing to support the vulnerable and food insecure SCTP households during humanitarian crises in a way that avoids eroding the progress on lifting them from extreme poverty whilst taking into account an expected significant decline in the next MVAC response.

The aim of the humanitarian response is to reach up to 6.69 million people with food or cash assistance before March 2017.⁴³ Those SCTP beneficiary households experiencing El Niño-related food



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Agness, 26, with one of her children at her home in Zomba district, South Malawi. An emergency drought situation was announced in February 2017. Agness is the mother of six children between 1 and 10 years. To the untrained eye, the crops in Agness's field look fresh and green. But the peaks, where there should have been mature corn, are dry and damaged. She says: "Over the past five years we have not had normal crops. We can no longer feed our family. The rain came too late, the maize is broken, and we have almost nothing to harvest. This year we'll get maybe a fifth of the normal harvest."

insecurity received both emergency assistance and their long-term SCTP cash transfers during that period.

Qualitative research suggests a good level of understanding and acceptance of the selection process for the Social Cash Transfer Programme at community level. Further refinements are being made to the community consultation process for selection of humanitarian response beneficiaries, including strengthening grievance resolution mechanisms.⁴⁴ This is a recognition of the opportunity to make selection and targeting processes responsive to the views of affected communities and people⁴⁵.

Funding

As for other countries in the region, funding continues to be a major constraint in Malawi, with a significant shortfall affecting the emergency response. Additional support for emergency cash assistance has been secured in recent months from the Malawi Government and donors, including USAID, UK aid, ECHO, the Netherlands, Japan, Australia, and Norway. Malawi had also proactively pursued early

action for risk financing, purchasing drought insurance from African Risk Capacity (ARC) in advance of the 2015–2016 El Niño event, but no payout was made as the drought emergency did not meet the terms of the insurance premium.

Coordination and information management

Malawi has started implementing the Unified Beneficiary Registry (UBR), a universal social protection database with strong potential to be used as the go-to information system for humanitarian response. The UBR, currently operational in 2 districts, and set to roll out nationally over the coming years, contains data on the poorest 50 per cent of households. As such, it includes the poorest 10 per cent, who participate in the Social Cash Transfer Programme and the next 15 per cent who are reached by the public works programme, as well as additional registrants who are not currently receiving consistent support but remain highly poor and vulnerable.

In the past, agencies implementing a humanitarian response would carry out their own targeting in each relevant district. A pilot using the UBR as the primary tool for humanitarian targeting in the context of the El Niño response is being carried out in one district to test the efficacy and efficiency of this tool in the case of drought and other shocks.⁴⁶

Innovation

The Government of Malawi is considering shifting to a fully electronic payment system for social cash transfers. The process requires a considerable financial outlay at the outset to build a robust information system; train recipients in basic financial literacy and the use of e-payments; establish a network of agents and call centres; and support nationwide network availability and access to electricity.⁴⁷ Such a system would bring long-term advantages in the form of reducing recurrent expenses, improving transparency and accountability, and establishing a mechanism through which additional payments can be made at a negligible marginal cost, e.g. when responding quickly in an emergency.

In the absence of a unified system, in context of the current El Niño response, SCTP cash transfers and humanitarian cash transfers were delivered through separate funding channels. More harmonized delivery mechanisms could help support future humanitarian responses in Malawi.⁴⁸

CASE STUDY: ZAMBIA

The Social Cash Transfer (SCT) Programme

Despite more than a decade of impressive economic growth and accession to middle income status, Zambia continues to have high levels of poverty. In 2015, poverty affected approximately 54 per cent of the population. Under the National Social Protection Policy adopted in 2014, the Social Cash Transfer (SCT), the country's flagship social assistance programme, aims to reduce extreme poverty and the intergenerational transmission of poverty. The programme, based on a one-district pilot in 2003, has been successfully scaled up from 60,000 households in 19 districts in 2013 to 238,000 households (approximately 8 per cent of the population) in 78 of the country's 105 districts in June 2016. There are plans to expand to all districts by end 2017.

The SCT is primarily aimed at labour-constrained households, including those with older persons, with persons with a severe disability, and those with a high dependency ratio. The benefit of 70 Kwacha (US\$7) per month is paid bimonthly, and doubled for households with persons with disabilities. Payments are administered manually by civil servants known as pay point managers.⁴⁹ Community-based volunteers play an important role in communication, targeting, and payment monitoring, especially as part of Community Welfare Assistance Committees.

Recent evaluations (2014, 2016) have documented the impact of the programme.⁵⁰ This includes alleviating poverty in beneficiary households: a reduction of 9–10 percentage points in extreme poverty and 10–12 percentage points in the poverty gap (e.g., the distance between household income and the poverty line). Households have become more food secure throughout the year and families are improving their housing conditions, buying more livestock and necessary items for children, reducing debt, and investing in productive activities. Thanks to the transfer, more children had all their material needs (2 sets of clothing, shoes, and a blanket) met and more children stayed in school, an effect that was particularly pronounced for children in the 11–14 age group. Overall, for every Kwacha in cash transfers, beneficiary households have generated an additional 0.5 to 0.68 Kwacha through productive impacts.

Scaling up in emergencies

Reduced rainfall associated with the 2015/16 El Niño affected around a third of the country, particularly the southern and western provinces. In collaboration with the Disaster Risk Management and Mitigation Unit and development partners, the Ministry of Community Development and Social Welfare identified ways for the Social Cash Transfer programme to support the humanitarian response. Three key approaches were chosen: increasing the magnitude of the cash transfer, scaling up coverage in affected districts, and piloting an Emergency Cash Transfer in selected areas. The approaches are based on the key principles of alignment with the regular cash transfer programme as well as of progressively building a more shock-responsive cash transfer and social protection system.

1. *Increasing the size of the cash transfer (vertical expansion).*

A larger transfer helps households continue to meet food needs as prices increase. Cash transfers support households to buy diverse food from the local market and may also aid recovery through purchase of agricultural inputs, as well as covering additional consumption constraints that households may be facing as a result of the drought. In view of high levels of inflation since mid-2015, in general as well as for food prices, indexation of the transfer value is required for cash transfer beneficiaries to maintain their purchasing power and for the impacts to be sustained. This approach increases the value of the SCT for the entire caseload, including districts not affected by El Niño. An analysis by the FAO Protection to Production team suggests that for every percentage point increase in the price of cereals, the cash transfer should increase by 0.8 per cent. With current levels of food price inflation, the value of the transfer should rise by around 20 Kwacha, bringing it to 90 Kwacha.

2. *Scaling up the SCT programme (horizontal expansion)* to reach full coverage in affected districts. The SCT programme already has partial



School children at Sengezane Primary school head home after school in Matebeland South Province, Zimbabwe. Families in the area struggled to meet basic food needs after crop failures related to the El Niño-driven drought.

or full coverage in the majority of districts affected by El Niño. The Ministry proposed a horizontal expansion of the programme, bringing forward the date of the rollout to full coverage in all affected districts. Given limited resources, at the time of writing, this option was only proposed for the 6 districts that are part of the Emergency Cash Transfer pilot described below.

3. Piloting an Emergency Cash Transfer (ECT).

The pilot, which is run in 5 drought-affected districts, 2 of which are national SCT districts, aims to alleviate the impact of the crisis through consumption support while stimulating and supporting local markets. It includes an emergency cash transfer to 22,205 food-insecure households and provides support, information and training to local retailers. The pilot is implemented by Concern Worldwide and Save the Children in close collaboration with the Ministry of Community Development and Social Welfare at headquarters and district level. The transfer value and the targeting mechanism of the emergency cash transfer mirror the SCT programme criteria and the objective is to integrate a humanitarian window into the regular programme in the longer term. The pilot is funded by DFID and overseen by a Steering Committee which comprises both

Government representatives and development partners, including UNICEF.



On 9 February 2016 in central Ethiopia, (left) Harko, 12, accompanied by her brother, walks home across an arid stretch of land behind two donkeys carrying jerrycans filled with water. Harko, who must search for water almost every day, no longer attends school.

CASE STUDY: ZIMBABWE

The Harmonized Social Cash Transfer (HSCT) Programme

The Harmonized Social Cash Transfer (HSCT) is a child-sensitive unconditional cash transfer programme aimed at labour-constrained and food-insecure households in Zimbabwe. The goal of the HSCT is to raise families out of food poverty and to promote positive outcomes for children. It is financed through the Government of Zimbabwe and a multi-donor fund, the Child Protection Fund Phase II (CPF II), which is managed by UNICEF in support of the third phase of the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children 2016–2020 (NAP III).

The HSCT programme was introduced in 2012 following the implementation of a successful pilot in 2011. At peak enrolment in February 2014 the programme recorded 55,509 households in 19 of the country's 65 social welfare administrative districts. The bimonthly HSCT has paid out a total of US\$40 million over the 25 cycles between January 2012 and June 2016.

In 2013, a rigorous process and impact evaluation at 12 months showed that the HSCT had made a positive impact on household consumption, resilience, dietary diversity, health, education and productivity. Overall, cash delivery, monitoring and feedback systems have been effective in enabling the identification of problems arising from this complex operation so that appropriate solutions are developed and adopted in a timely manner. Challenges included linking the cash transfer programme to child protection services more effectively, strengthening grievance-handling mechanisms, and developing a programme exit strategy and a communication strategy. There has been significant progress in addressing these areas in 2015 and 2016.⁵¹ In early 2015, a comprehensive risk and accountability framework for the programme was developed to establish a risk and accountability-informed implementation strategy.

Emergency response

The Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee estimates that the 2015/16 El Niño drought rendered 2.2 million people food insecure – a number that is expected to reach 4.1 million, or 42 per cent of the rural population, by March 2017.⁵²

It was not possible to extend the reach of the Harmonized Social Cash Transfer during the first 8 months of 2016, despite growing need on the ground. While in principle the HSCT system would have been a good platform for scaled-up cash assistance to some of the most vulnerable households, in practice it was not used for this purpose. No payments were made between March and August of 2016, as funds from the first phase of the CPF had been exhausted and the second phase had not yet begun. Payments resumed in September of 2016, inclusive of a back-payment for March through August.

After receiving the back payment in September 2016, 11 of the 19 districts were faced with discontinued support from the CPF in October of 2016. However, Government insisted that the districts would remain on the HSCT programme and that fiscal support would be provided in this regard. Government only released a small amount to pay one urban district out of the 11 in December of 2016 and no other release has been made. In December 2016 and January 2017, UNICEF secured a humanitarian emergency support grant from the government of Germany, which was used to provide a one-off payment to enrolled households in the 11 districts which no longer received CPF support.

A monthly drought support top-up of US\$3 per individual/household (capped at 4 people per household) for existing HSCT beneficiary households in the 8 most food-insecure districts⁵³ has been proposed, but no funding has been secured for this purpose. Instead, food and cash assistance has been delivered by the Government and several United Nations and NGO partners through multiple parallel systems.⁵⁴

Funding

The HSCT has not played a role in the El Niño response mostly due to a prolonged, extreme shortage of Government funds. A drop in external funding in 2016 meant the number of routine recipients had to drop by more than half at a time of extreme population vulnerability. The lack of consistent funding has crippled the capacity of the safety net to operate as a poverty reduction tool, let



Save the Children Nutrition and Health Manager in Zimbabwe Tendai Gunda weighs a child during a community screening for malnourished children in the Binga district of Zimbabwe. A state of disaster has been declared in Zimbabwe after El Niño-induced droughts led to failed harvests and critical food shortages. Malnutrition rates have soared to their highest rate in 15 years – with one in twenty children under 5 are malnourished.

alone as a lead mechanism for preparedness, mitigation or humanitarian response.⁵⁵

Coordination and information management

While the HSCT registry includes useful records on all households in the districts it operates in, the programme covers only 19 of the country's 65 social welfare administrative districts and so cannot be used as a comprehensive database for tracking households with the greatest needs across the country.

The coordination of the humanitarian response to El Niño, as well as the coordination between the humanitarian and social protection sectors in Zimbabwe, have been criticized.⁵⁶ There are divergent views about whether support should primarily take the form of cash, or in-kind assistance. The Government and some agencies feel that food

distributions can be the best option in the short term, in light of the prevailing circumstances which include unstable food markets, lack of liquidity in the country, and an emergency on a regional scale. Others support cash transfers as the most efficient means of reaching large numbers of households as food is still being imported.

Efforts are being made to include HSCT beneficiaries in districts which have been identified by the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee as at risk of food insecurity in the context of the El Niño emergency in the Lean Season Assistance (LSA) programme operated by the World Food Programme (WFP). Humanitarian relief efforts have for the most part been externally funded, with no central Ministry-led management coordination of the parallel systems of cash and food assistance being implemented across the country by large NGOs and other humanitarian agencies.⁵⁷

Conclusion

Between October 2015 and July 2016, El Niño conditions exacerbated by climate change have brought drought to countries of Eastern and Southern Africa. This paper found that in the majority of cases, existing social protection systems have played an important role in the El Niño response in the five focus countries. Vertical top-ups were provided to beneficiaries within the existing social cash transfer programmes in Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi and Zambia. In addition, in Ethiopia, the social cash transfer programme was expanded to additional beneficiaries as a response to the impacts of El Niño. Other instances of social protection proving shock-responsive include resilience-building initiatives in Ethiopia and Lesotho, where links between agricultural and nutrition programming and social protection have been strengthened.

At the same time, countries affected by El Niño in Eastern and Southern Africa continue to face important challenges. In all five countries studied, national social protection and information management systems have had only partial reach. Other weaknesses are related to lack of funding, coordination and leadership. In some instances, humanitarian cash transfer programmes are being set up in parallel to existing social protection programmes. Affected countries in the region experienced serious emergency funding shortfalls, and were not in a position to expand existing systems to cover temporary humanitarian needs of a wider

population. Zimbabwe presents the extreme example, where funding levels did not even allow for continued support for beneficiaries of the national safety net programme at a time of exacerbated stress during the El Niño emergency. The gaps and shortfalls identified in this and all cases are likely to have real and damaging impacts on vulnerable communities, and most especially children.

While most governments and partner agencies recognize the potential centrality of a national social protection system at times of humanitarian response to shocks such as El Niño, there is a widespread perception that current systems are not sufficiently robust or universal to effectively provide the architecture for a coordinated emergency response on a national scale. While priority has been given to addressing immediate needs at the time of El Niño, it is important not to lose sight of the importance of developing systems to lay the ground for a more effective and coordinated response to comparable shocks in the future.

Recommendations

The Sustainable Development Goals agreed in 2015 have renewed the global momentum to eradicate extreme poverty in all its forms, including among children, and the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit generated a sense of shared urgency to support those populations most impacted by instability, conflict and the growing threat of climate stress and shocks. It is now widely recognized that social protection systems have a pivotal role to play in the prevention of, and response to, crises. At the same time, consensus is of little use if it does not lead to effective action, and the Summit commitments are being tested with every shock or emergency, including the recent response to the effects of El Niño in many countries.

For social protection to fulfil its potential as a robust and agile mechanism for assistance in humanitarian emergencies, and one that strengthens household resilience and promotes the realization of children's rights, it is important to build support for a shared vision of its place in the architecture of response among national governments and development partners. Collective advocacy to this end will be necessary at the highest levels. For example, development partners are working together to provide technical guidance on the development of a global blueprint for action, standard operating procedures, and agreed minimum standards to United Nations Special Envoys on El Niño and Climate. Shock-responsive, child-sensitive social protection needs to be central to these efforts. Some recommendations for action are listed below.

For national governments of Eastern and Southern Africa countries affected by El Niño and climate stress:

- Provide clear and consistent leadership in coordinating humanitarian and social protection activities, for preparedness and early warning/action before a shock, as well as during the response to a shock. Social protection will only be effective in response to shocks if these different sectoral actors share a common vision based on a continuum of response across development and humanitarian interventions, and put this into practice in a coordinated and collaborative fashion.
- Assess whether national social protection instruments are capable of scale-up in response to crisis.
- Based on the above assessment, implement necessary measures to gradually build shock-responsive national social protection systems. Systems should be designed to be ready for efficient and timely horizontal and/or vertical expansion in times of stress, through measures such as preparatory registration of vulnerable households. There should be clear rules on targeting, transfer size, and criteria for expansion. Inclusion should be determined on the basis of predetermined criteria relevant to the crisis, with communities playing a role in validating the selection to minimize the role of other influences in determining coverage.

- Demonstrate strong political leadership and ensure funding is available for regular and scaled-up social protection in times of shock. This will encourage donors to honour their commitment as part of the ‘grand bargain’ on risk financing.
- Where feasible, harness innovation and private sector investment, and foster financial inclusion for the poorest groups by delivering cash transfers via mobile money mechanisms and electronic transfers, even in remote areas. Negotiate with mobile money service providers that no fees are applied to cash transfers.
- During the design and implementation of social protection programmes, ensure continued measurement of the impact of these interventions on children. Monitor impacts for girls and boys of different age groups, and include those who fall inside and outside the scope of the programme. Monitoring systems should be able to capture both intended and unintended impacts across a range of indicators.
- Take advantage of the opportunity to support governments with strengthening coordination, and to convene donors and other stakeholders around a more coherent, universal and systemic social protection approach to humanitarian response.
- Support national governments to ensure effective stop-gap measures are in place to respond to emergencies and short-term shocks while long-term universal social protection systems are developed or strengthened for more comprehensive coverage.
- Build inter-agency consensus on the central role social protection can play in humanitarian action. It is important that there is clear communication from the top level within humanitarian and development organizations, so that effective collaboration is not undermined by traditional approaches, ‘territoriality’, or a default to working on parallel systems.
- Advocate for investing in and using existing national social protection systems in humanitarian response.

For United Nations Member State governments:

- Finalize common standard operating procedures (SOPs) for risk analysis, preparedness, and early warning and early action. Broad recognition of the role of social protection systems in accelerated delivery of cash and other humanitarian support should be incorporated in the documents.
- Work with multilateral financial institutions to push for global risk finance mechanisms built on existing good practice, which can guarantee funding for early action. A proportion of this funding should be delivered to social protection systems, complementing national government commitments.
- Continue to develop innovative ways of involving the private sector in risk financing, resilience programming, and preparedness and climate adaptation activities.

For development and humanitarian partners:

- Under the leadership of national governments, coordinate social protection interventions, in particular cash transfers, and apply a common system of targeting, transfer size and information management to ensure maximum harmonization in delivering support to both the chronically and the short-term vulnerable. Coordination should be based around existing national coordination platforms.
- Continue to carry out research and implement programmes addressing the root causes of poverty, including factors such as climate change, population pressures, urbanization, unequal growth, and the monopoly of pastoralism.
- Support governments to increase the effectiveness of national social protection systems for children by piloting child-sensitive approaches, providing evidence on what works best for children, and building the capacity of government and local partners (via training, technology transfers, regional visits, etc.) on best practices in terms of reaching the poorest and most excluded children and families, and ensuring that social protection interventions are effectively linked with other services for children.
- Support governments to build systems to effectively and continuously monitor the impact of social protection initiatives on children, particularly in the context of shocks and with particular focus on near-to-real-time monitoring of the situation of vulnerable children.
- Link safety nets to more surge-adaptive child protection and social welfare services in disaster-affected areas. This is particularly important in the context of greater reliance on electronic transfers which allow for less interaction with individuals responsible for distribution, eligibility decisions and monitoring on the ground.

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