Welcome to the fifteenth issue of the Centre for Social Protection Newsletter. The CSP is a global network of academics, policy-makers, NGOs and others who are working together to mainstream social protection in development policy and build social protection systems and instruments throughout the developing world that are national, comprehensive, long-term, sustainable, and benefit the poor.

This edition highlights some of the key findings of the Social Protection in Asia programme, a research and policy network investigating the construction of effective and inclusive social protection systems across Asia.

‘TALKING POINT’: KEY FINDINGS FROM THE SOCIAL PROTECTION in ASIA PROGRAMME

The Social Protection in Asia (SPA) programme, brought together partners from China, Vietnam, Indonesia, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh to facilitate research, advocacy and network building with the aim of overcoming barriers to the extension of social protection to poor and marginalized groups in Asia. The programme, which ran from January 2007 to November 2010, was funded by Ford Foundation and IDRC and managed by the CSP with regional co-ordination by the Institute of Human Development, India. A number of key findings emerged from the programme’s research.

First of all, it is evident that state support for social protection is frequently driven by political considerations - the need to win elections, to contain social unrest in the face of growing inequality or to build its own political legitimacy. Moments of crisis heighten such considerations along with the recent financial crises, SPA research notes past and recent natural disasters as catalysts for social protection including: famine in Bangladesh, drought in India, floods in Pakistan and an earthquake in China.

The importance of politics in shaping state responses suggests that non-state actors, particularly within civil society, can act as a driving force to bring socially marginalised groups, those with very little political clout, onto the social protection agenda. Community-based and non-government organisations have acted as advocates on behalf of these marginalised groups developing approaches responsive to their particular needs and constraints. They have significantly improved the effectiveness of existing programmes by: disseminating information; mobilising beneficiaries; auditing performance and; holding officials accountable.

Many of the successful interventions investigated by SPA partners include attempts to learn lessons from past efforts. Careful piloting in the early stages can help to pick up flaws in design before programmes are taken to scale. The integration of monitoring and evaluation systems into program design can also ensure the timely gathering of information to improve programme design and adapt to local contexts. However, turning individual interventions into a systematic approach relies on a comprehensive policy and planning framework being in place. Where these do exist, evidence from SPA shows that social protection programmes can be scaled up successfully.
However, a major barrier to the extension of social protection has been views, by some policymakers, that social protection is a fiscal burden and that it promotes dependency. SPA research counters this view. It highlights the productive use to which poor people put their transfers and the value they attach to being a contributing member of society. Well-designed social protection is shown to promote more inclusive patterns of growth, by strengthening people’s asset base and human capital. This promotes peoples ability to take advantage of new opportunities as well as contributing to the development of infrastructure within local communities.

Finally, the SPA program provides insights into the pathways through which research can translate into policy influence. SPA researchers have helped to influence the way that policy makers think about problems. They have offered: lessons from practice; made recommendations to improve design: challenged state action when it impacted adversely on the poor and; provided evidence supporting the need for comprehensive social protection systems.

To access all of SPA’s working papers, policy briefs and many other publications click here

SOCIAL PROTECTION NEWS AND EVENTS:

NEWS

Social protection for inclusive development
The European Report on Development, 2010 was launched on 07 December 2010 at the European Development Days, in Brussels.

ISSA and ILO strategies for the extension of coverage
Universal social security is the goal was the unmistakable message of a joint platform by the ISSA and the ILO on the fourth day of the World Social Security Forum, in Cape Town, South Africa from the 29th November-4th December. Read the ISSA strategy for the extension of social security coverage.

African parliamentarians vow to do more for children at a meeting on social protection
Forty parliamentarians came to Namibia’s capital, Windhoek, for a three-day regional workshop on social protection hosted by the Parliament of Namibia with support from the Intra-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UNICEF. The aim of the participants was to build more consensus on building stronger safety nets and social-protection schemes for their most vulnerable constituents, especially children.
Read the meeting’s findings: Children and AIDS: The Social Protection Response The Role of Parliaments

EVENTS

Forthcoming:
The workshop will provide opportunities for stakeholders from developing member countries to discuss common issues affecting social protection for older people in Asia and learn about the latest ideas and experiences in designing and implementing social pension schemes across various countries in Asia. Results from a study on Social Pensions in Asia will be presented at the workshop. The study aims to (i) assess the origin, impacts and institutional models of various programs and policies designed to establish non-contributory social protection schemes (or social pensions) for older people in Asia, and (ii) distil policy lessons for informing design and implementation of social protection schemes for older people in the region.

The Centre for Social Protection is convening a 3-day conference on Social Protection for Social Justice, to be held in April 2011 at IDS Sussex. The conference aims to explore future directions for social protection that go beyond social safety nets and risk management, to address broader concerns with redistributive equity and social injustice.
Recent events
How can we better promote gender-sensitive social protection?
1 November 2010 - Overseas Development Institute, London
Speakers at this event introduced a gender lens to debates around social protection, drawing on empirical evidence from an AusAID and DFID-funded multi-country study carried out in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The link above includes a video and report of this meeting. Click here for Overseas Development Institute’s related resources on gender-sensitive social protection.

TRAINING
Universalising Socioeconomic Security for the Poor (USS)
The Institute of Social Studies, Netherlands, is opening application proceedings for two short postgraduate programmes in universalising socioeconomic security for the poor from January-March 2012.

Students can choose between three ways of completing the programme:
- A 5.5-week certificate course at ISS, in the Hague.
- A 10.5-week diploma course, which includes a 5-week study visit to India, with field exposure to the grassroots movement of SEWA, in Gujarat, and the state-led approach adopted in Kerala (with CDS).
- As a 10.5-week diploma course completed entirely at ISS, where, after the first 5.5 weeks student delve deeper into an aspect of socioeconomic security of particular relevance to their work or interest.

Target Group: USS is directed mainly towards early and mid-career development practitioners, activists, and researchers in NGOs, international development organizations, and government agencies involved in social provisioning and protection and poverty alleviation.
Further details: http://www.iss.nl/Diploma-Programmes Contact and admissions: student.office@iss.nl

OPPORTUNITIES
Head of Research & Evaluation, Kampala BRAC USA
BRAC USA is recruiting a Head of Research & Evaluation. Reporting to the Deputy Executive Director, BRAC International, s/he will oversee and manage the BRAC Uganda Research Unit, based in Kampala. Please direct all inquiries, nominations and applications to santhosh@bracusa.org

NEW PUBLICATIONS:
Cash Transfers for Vulnerable Children in Kenya: From Political Choice to Scale Up

Conditions, Conditionality, Conditionalities, Responsibilities: Finding Common Ground
Esther Schüring, Maastricht Graduate School of Governance, Working Paper 14

Differing government and donor perspectives on Cash Transfer based social protection in sub-Saharan Africa: The implications for EU Social Protection Programming
Background Paper for European Report on Development 2010 prepared by Anna McCord, Overseas Development Institute

Extending social security to all. A guide through challenges and options
This book outlines basic concepts such as the social protection floor and the social security staircase, analyses the affordability of various approaches, and examines the results of practices around the world, especially in low- and middle-income countries.
Financing Social Protection in the Light of International Spending Targets: A Public Sector Spending Review
Jessica Hagen-Zanker and Anna McCord with Karen Ellis, Ed Hedger, Sam Moon, and Rohit Singh, Overseas Development Institute

In Focus: Extension of social security coverage
Latest papers from the ISSA Project on examining the existing knowledge of social security coverage 2009

ISSA Social Security Research and Policy Manual: Supporting research in social security institutions in low- and middle-income countries
The International Social Security Association (ISSA) Social Security Research and Policy Manual provides a practical tool to develop and strengthen the research capacity of social security institutions in low- and middle-income countries. It assists managers and directors in social security institutions to improve policy design, and supports research and analysis staff to focus their research on relevant policy issues and to improve the quality and impact of their input.

Microinsurance Social Performance Indicators Workshop Report
This workshop report is the first public document on social performance for microinsurance. It is the outcome of a workshop with 15 microinsurance practitioners held in Luxembourg on 5th to 7th October 2010 by ADA, BRS and the Microinsurance Network.

Social Protection and Child Survival
This paper looks at the definition and rationale of social protection, sets out Save the Children UK’s position in key debates, and makes recommendations for effective programme design that maximises benefits for children.

Swaziland Old Age Grant Impact Assessment
This report, produced by RHVP, HelpAge International and UNICEF, adds to the growing body of empirical evidence on cash transfers in southern Africa by analysing their impact at a household level and discussing beneficiary experiences of different delivery mechanisms.

This is the first in a new series of biennial reports by the ILO that aim to map social security coverage globally, to presenting various methods and approaches for assessing coverage, and to identifying gaps in coverage.

SECRETARIAT:
The Centre for Social Protection network now has over 800 members. If you have events, research, or publications to promote, or are looking for partners or people with particular skills, send us an email and we will include it in future newsletters and post it on the Centre website. If you know others who you think would want to be part of the Centre, please ask them to email socialprotection@ids.ac.uk to be added to the mailing list.

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