

# **SOCIAL PROTECTION RESEARCH SCOPING STUDY**

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**by**

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## ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AU	African Union
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfers
CFPR	Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction
CGE	Computable General Equilibrium (model)
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
DECT	Dowa Emergency Cash Transfer (Concern Universal Scheme, Malawi, 2005-06)
DFID	Department for International Development
FACT	Food And Cash Transfers (Concern Universal Scheme, Malawi, 2004-05)
HSNP	Hunger Safety Net Programme (DFID-funded programme, northern Kenya, starting Nov 2008)
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
ILRI	International Livestock Research Institute
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NREGS	National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
RHVP	Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme (DFID-funded regional programme, southern Africa 2005-10)
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
WFP	World Food Programme

## Executive Summary

1. The report sets out an agenda for future research on social protection in low income countries. It does this by first examining the current state of knowledge on social protection, second identifying knowledge gaps and emerging issues, third considering the scope and content of a potential research programme, and fourth exploring the institutional arrangements that might best achieve the capacity building and policy-influencing objectives of such a research programme. The report is based on a review of the recent literature on social protection, on interviews with nearly 90 respondents conducted face-to-face or by telephone or email, and on field trips to India, Bangladesh, South Africa and Kenya to discuss social protection research needs with donors, NGOs, governments and research institutions.
2. The report approaches its remit in the first instance by making a fundamental distinction between what we know and what we do not know about social protection, the poverty and deprivation it sets out to address, the scope and design of schemes and programmes, and their short and long effects on direct beneficiaries and broader development processes. It finds that in this context the *why* of social protection (poverty and vulnerability) can be usefully distinguished from the *how* (design and implementation), and from the *with what impacts* (direct and indirect, immediate and long term). So far we know a considerable amount about the *why*, a growing but incomplete amount about the *how* (especially the political dimensions), and very little indeed about the ‘with what impacts’. This places the emphasis of any future large scale research programme squarely on politics and impacts.
3. In fact, if we take continued knowledge deficits regarding the *how* of social protection in conjunction with an emphasis on longer term and broader social protection impacts, it is possible to draw up a shortlist of five topic areas that we consider should form the core of a future research programme, and these are listed as follows:
  - A. design and delivery of social transfers
  - B. micro economic and social impacts of social transfers
  - C. macro impacts and linkages, including pro-poor growth effects
  - D. politics and financing of social protection
  - E. environmental change and social protection, including climate change
4. A total of 25 different sub-topics in social protection are identified in association with these five core topic areas (p.xx and Figure 1 in the main report). However, fortunately, there are many instances where it makes sense to bundle several sub-topics together, either because they represent different facets of a larger issue, or because they share the same data collection process. In the end, the research scoping team decided to put forward the following 10 potential research projects in social protection as a priority list in descending order of importance (see also Table 2 in the main report). These are not the only research projects that could be devised from the underlying list of 25 sub-topics, and DFID may well have different preferences from the authors of this report. It is easy enough to re-assign sub-topics in different ways from the complete listing given in the main report:
  - (1) Beneficiary Tracking (Longitudinal Studies)
  - (2) Politics and Financing of Scaling Up
  - (3) Growth and Poverty Impacts

- (4) Innovation and Private Sector Engagement
  - (5) Graduation and Sequencing
  - (6) Scope and Targeting (link to Scaling Up)
  - (7) Citizenship and State (link to Politics)
  - (8) Contingency Financing (link to Social Insurance)
  - (9) Sustainable Public Financing
  - (10) Labour Standards (links to informal sector social protection)
5. The identification of core topic areas, sub-topics, and potential research projects permits a framework to be constructed in order to guide a call for research. Such a framework needs to tread a careful path between, on the one hand, providing firm guidance regarding the broad areas in which emphasis should be put (for example, emphasis on social protection impacts and linkages rather than on the reasons for having social protection in the first place), and, on the other hand, allowing consortia scope and flexibility to develop their own ideas. This report provides the building blocks upon which such a framework can be constructed. At the same time it also provides a checklist (in the form of the topics and sub-topics identified as knowledge gaps by numerous research scoping respondents) against which consortia ideas can later be compared.
6. In terms of methodology, the authors foresee the use of two main methods in a future social protection research programme, and these are:
  - A. *Household tracking (longitudinal studies)*, including beyond the end of pilot schemes and beyond the death of pensioners in pension-receiving households. An emphasis on longitudinal studies also implies much longer timescales than is usual for policy-related research, and we are talking about 4-5 years minimum for anything useful to be said about the cumulative and eventual impacts of social transfers.
  - B. *Cross-region and cross-country comparative research*. A considerable proportion of the research topics identified in the list above require comparative lesson learning between regions and countries, and this was powerfully argued for by many of the scoping respondents. This applies to the politics and financing of scaling up, innovation in delivery, graduation and sequencing, citizenship and state, contingency financing, sustainable public financing, and labour standards.
7. Other methodological considerations and principles arising from the literature review and knowledge gap discussions were as follows:
  - (a) longitudinal studies are required to discover the real sustained welfare, well-being and asset building effects of social transfers, as well as their resilience and adaptability consequences linked to environmental shocks;
  - (b) cross-regional and cross-country lesson learning in addition to Africa and Asia should encourage comparative insights from developed countries (especially relevant to categorical transfers such as child support payments), and from poorer and smaller Latin American countries, the experiences of which may be more relevant to Africa than the well-known big country examples of Brazil and Mexico.

- (c) research should engage with real social transfer projects and programmes and the policy processes that enable them to occur, so that findings can, in part, inform better practice as ‘action’ research;
  - (d) while being policy relevant, research must be kept separate from advocacy, since research designed to serve advocacy interests can make for ill-founded policy conclusions and costly mistakes;
  - (e) for this reason, amongst others, project proposals should be subject to external peer review and mentoring, and this should be built into research programme design.
8. The report provides a tour of contextual matters surrounding the design of a future research programme, as requested in the research scoping terms of reference. The main points that arise are summarised as follows:
- (a) the research scoping demonstrates the strength of southern demand for social protection research;
  - (b) scope exists for creative research partnerships not just with southern academic institutions or thinktanks, but also with southern and international NGOs and CGIAR centres;
  - (c) true capacity building in southern partners must involve training, education, skills development and qualifications, for otherwise all that happens is that existing capacity is given more work to do;
  - (d) the report favours a consortium led by a grouping of institutions that already possess a substantial international research outreach, because cross-region and cross-country lesson learning turns out to be such a major desirable feature of a future research programme;
  - (e) the successful research consortium should be required to follow the ESRC model whereby researchers that collect data must make their data sets publicly available, and properly documented, so that others can potentially do different work with the same data;
  - (f) the research programme requires a minimum duration of 5 years, especially given the importance of longitudinal studies within overall research design;
  - (g) DFID may wish to consider instituting a small expert panel (preferably based in an academic institution, perhaps on a call-down contract) independent of the successful consortium to play several related roles of peer review, mentoring, trouble-shooting, and assessing;
  - (h) the design of the research programme should avoid the temptation to ‘bolt-on’ too many optional extras unrelated to doing research since it is all too often the case that too many extras merely result in shrinking the resources available for doing the serious, in-depth, and innovative research that is supposed to be the core function of the programme;

- (i) the future research programme represents an opportunity for research funding to complement ongoing DFID policy programmes in social protection such as the HSNP in Kenya and Phase 2 of RHVP in southern Africa (and no doubt others in Asia), and it would be remiss for such synergies not to be explored in the inception phase of the programme.
9. In the end, it is the conduct of excellent research likely to make a serious contribution to innovation in the provision of social protection that must be the most important principle to follow in the construction of a social protection research programme.

## Social Protection Research Scoping Study

### Overview

This report sets out an agenda for future research on social protection in low income countries. It does this by first examining the current state of knowledge on social protection, second identifying knowledge gaps and emerging issues, third considering the scope and content of a potential research programme, and fourth exploring the institutional arrangements that might best achieve the capacity building and policy-influencing objectives of such a research programme. The report is based on a review of the recent literature on social protection, on interviews with nearly 90 respondents conducted face-to-face or by telephone or email, and on field trips to India, Bangladesh, South Africa and Kenya to discuss social protection research needs with donors, NGOs, governments and research institutions.

The report approaches its remit in the first instance by making a fundamental distinction between what we know and what we do not know about social protection, the poverty and deprivation it sets out to address, the scope and design of schemes and programmes, and their short and long effects on direct beneficiaries and broader development processes. It finds that in this context the *why* of social protection (poverty and vulnerability) can be usefully distinguished from the *how* (design and implementation), and from the *with what impacts* (direct and indirect, immediate and long term). So far we know a considerable amount about the why, a growing but incomplete amount about the how, and very little indeed about the with what impacts (see Table 1). This places the emphasis of any future large scale research programme squarely on the impacts.

These impacts occur at varying different timescales and levels of aggregation, and here again existing knowledge varies from moderately well informed about immediate and personal impacts (for example, the prevention of hunger for direct beneficiaries) to rapidly dwindling knowledge as the timescale increases and the scope of indirect impacts widens out to include the broader political, economic and social linkages of social protection. Therefore it can be inferred that a future research programme needs to focus not just on impacts, but on the longer term effects on the well-being of direct beneficiaries and their families, and on the broader linkages of social protection to pro-poor growth, politics and the state, civil society and social and environmental change. In fact, if we take continued knowledge deficits regarding the how of social protection in conjunction with this emphasis on longer term and broader social protection impacts, it is possible to draw up a shortlist of five topic areas that we consider should form the core of a future research programme, and these are listed as follows:

- (1) design and delivery of social transfers
- (2) micro economic and social impacts of social transfers
- (3) macro impacts and linkages, including pro-poor growth effects
- (4) politics and financing of social protection
- (5) environmental change and social protection, including climate change

Clearly, the content of each of these broad categories is fairly intricate and it is the task of much of this report to fill in the details. In addition, there are inevitably some researchable topics in social protection that do not quite fit into this scheme, or that straddle more than one of these broad topic areas, and it is important that these are not lost sight of in the effort to organise knowledge gaps into workable groups of this kind. A lot of future social protection research requires stronger linkages than in the past to be made between the micro and the

macro i.e. between the individual and household level of beneficiaries and their communities and the aggregate level of politics, the state and the broader economy. In the past, there has tended to be more emphasis placed on the micro level, reflecting the learning process involved in piloting schemes to address different types of vulnerability and deprivation using an evolving set of distinct delivery forms (cash, food, inputs and assets) and methods (coupons, vouchers, packs, rations). However, with social protection practice gravitating towards cash transfers on a national scale (nevertheless leaving plenty of room for debate about the universal, categorical or targeted character of beneficiary selection), the micro-macro linkages in both directions become substantially more important to understand. The report proceeds with a synthesis based on the literature concerning where we have come from and where we have got to in our knowledge of social protection in low income country settings.

Table 1: Some Main Research Dimensions in Social Protection

Questions	Covering	Topics and Sub-Topics
<b>Why?</b>	Reasons for Social Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ poverty &amp; destitution</li> <li>→ risk &amp; vulnerability</li> <li>→ needs</li> <li>→ rights</li> </ul>
<b>How?</b>	Design and Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ scope (universal, categorical, targeted)</li> <li>→ forms (food, cash, inputs, assets)</li> <li>→ targeting (criteria &amp; methods)</li> <li>→ cost efficiency (cost per unit transfer)</li> </ul>
<b>With What Impacts?</b>	Micro Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ beneficiaries (individuals, families)</li> <li>→ communities (social effects)</li> </ul>
	Macro Linkages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ growth</li> <li>→ poverty reduction</li> <li>→ politics &amp; state</li> <li>→ financing</li> </ul>

### Literature Review

Social protection in low income countries has been around for a long time even if not described as such (Midgley, 1997), and has placed emphasis on different levers of policy in different eras. In the 1960s and 1970s subsidising food at retail level was popular as a means of ensuring that all citizens could afford enough to eat, and certain countries were regarded as iconic in the enthusiasm with which they pursued low consumer prices of their staple foods (Sri Lanka - rice; Egypt - wheat; Tanzania - maize). In some well-known cases, too, these low consumer prices were made possible by very large transfers of food aid (Bangladesh). Interestingly, consumer price subsidies represented social protection at scale, a goal now being pursued enthusiastically by different means, and they also aligned political interest and social transfers in a way that appears more difficult to replicate in the current era.

Food subsidies as social protection fell out of favour for many different reasons: bureaucratic management of markets lost credence, subsidies were fiscally unaffordable, they favoured urban consumers above rural producers, world food prices began a long run decline making it cheaper to buy food from world markets than subsidise the consumption of domestic supplies, and so on. Nevertheless, recent events in world food markets may put this social protection policy back on the table, and some countries (notably Egypt) are once again issuing vouchers to poorer citizens enabling them to purchase food rations from government outlets at prices well below market levels.

In the 1980s, social protection switched to a minimalist stance, best captured by the notion of 'safety nets' that would play a limited role in protecting vulnerable citizens from the removal of previous state supports (like food and input subsidies), the higher risks associated with liberalised markets, and seasonal food deficits in the hungry season before the next harvest. Not only the coverage but also the delivery cost of safety nets should be minimised, hence the popularity of 'self-targeting' mechanisms of beneficiary selection, typified by food-for-work schemes that set the food ration at a level below the quantity that anyone able to produce food themselves, or already earning enough wages to secure food, would be interested in doing the hard physical work to acquire.

The safety net idea is predicated strongly on the notion that the economy as a whole is moving forward, living standards are rising, but nevertheless there are (dwindling) pockets of people especially in rural areas that confront seasonal or unexpected food entitlement gaps that need to be addressed. India has one of the earliest and best-known safety nets, nowadays called the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), and this remains to this day a central plank of India's public response to inadequate income and consumption at household level in rural areas. In Sub-Saharan Africa, too, safety nets have been the main response to temporary or seasonal deprivation since the mid-1980s (and right up to the present day), as exemplified by public works programmes of one kind or another in which self-selected beneficiaries participate in return for food-for-work, cash-for-work, or inputs-for-work (McCord, 2008).

In many ways, the limitations of safety nets provide the point of departure from which contemporary preoccupations in social protection, including cash transfers at scale, emerge. In particular, safety nets proved quite unequal to the task of protecting the minimum acceptable food consumption of populations in countries exhibiting rising vulnerability on a wide scale, prone to devastating droughts or floods or civil conflict, and the economies of which were not growing anything like fast enough to make hunger and destitution a residual problem affecting just a few people left behind while the rest of society moved to higher ground. The inadequacy of safety nets became plain in the ever rising requirement for supplementary and emergency measures in order to ensure the food security not of small groups but of entire populations and zones persistently or intermittently finding themselves on the brink of unacceptable hunger and deprivation. Most of these supplementary and emergency measures have tended to be in the form of food deliveries, and they are seriously high cost to put in place each time they are required.

The period from the mid-1980s to the mid-2000s saw an immense widening and deepening of our understanding of vulnerability, its causes and consequences. The touchstone of this was the publication in 1981 of the celebrated book by Amartya Sen on poverty and famines that introduced the idea of entitlements to food consumption, and recast the interpretation of

famines as failures of entitlement rather than failures in food supply (Sen, 1981). In a recent paper, Devereux (2006) uses Sen's entitlement scheme as a way of classifying different social protection mechanisms: production entitlement is boosted by free input packs or fertilizer subsidies, labour entitlement by food-for-work or cash-for-work schemes (safety nets), exchange entitlement by food price stabilisation (shades of the past), and transfer entitlement by social transfers (e.g. food aid or cash transfers).

The notion of entitlements leads in a few steps to why some people are more prone than others to entitlement failures. Risk of adverse events occurring to people is evidently a critical factor, but risk alone is not enough since even moderately well off people are able to deal with adverse events considerably better than very poor people. It is risk combined with a lack of ability to deal with a shock if it occurs that jointly constitutes a definition of vulnerability (Devereux, 2002; Dercon, 2002). The lack of ability to deal with a shock if it occurs is to do with the depleted asset status and lack of options of the household. The 1980s literature on famines had noted the sequencing of asset disposals and other behaviours by which poor families seek to maintain food consumption in the face of drought, a process referred to as coping (Corbett, 1988). Coping strategies (mainly selling assets in order to purchase food) result in depleted assets, and what matters then is how quickly and how completely families can rebuild their position in order once again to be able to withstand future shocks. This gave rise to the distinction made between *ex ante* coping (building assets) and *ex post* coping (asset sales) (Alwang *et al.*, 2001). The failure to rebuild assets after a shock (or to rebuild sufficiently before the next shock occurs) greatly increases vulnerability, and provides an explanation of the rising vulnerability trend observed in very poor, risk prone, countries and environments.

These vulnerability sequences have been explored fairly exhaustively in a number of settings (see, for example, Dercon, 2005) and constitute a fundamental part of what we already know about social protection as compared to what we still need to find out. Some powerful extensions to the basic model have included recognising the jointly debilitating effects of both household and community-wide shocks (Dercon, 2005); recognising the existence of thresholds that make it exceptionally difficult for those who have descended into chronic poverty to climb out (poverty traps) (Carter & Barrett, 2006; 2007; Carter *et al.*; 2008); and the limitations of so-called informal insurance (or 'community coping') for providing support when shocks occur (Morduch, 1999; Morduch & Sharma, 2002; Ellis, 2006). A lot of conceptual and empirical work has also been done concerning the impact of AIDS mortality in spreading and intensifying vulnerability in populations with a high prevalence rate of people living with HIV/AIDS (Barnett *et al.*, 2001, de Waal & Whiteside, 2003; Chapoto & Jayne, 2005; Slater, 2008).

Viewed through the lens of risk and vulnerability, and therefore associated in particular with events and trends in Sub-Saharan Africa over the past ten years or so, social protection can be interpreted as offering a potential means for overcoming the multiple factors causing persistent poverty and rising vulnerability. A helpful classification has been one that distinguishes the three social protection functions of protection, prevention and promotion (Guhan, 1994). The first refers to protecting the minimum acceptable consumption levels of those who are already in difficulty. The second refers to preventing those prone to adverse events and shocks from becoming more vulnerable (by stopping them from having to sell their assets). The third refers to promoting people's ability to become less vulnerable in the future (i.e. by helping them to build assets and achieve stronger livelihoods), and is therefore directed at escape from poverty traps. Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler (2004; 2008) also argue

in favour of a fourth, or transformative, function of social protection which is to promote social justice through building the rights and empowerment of the poor and vulnerable.

This conveniently brings us to definitional issues concerning social protection that have also received a good airing in the literature. There has been much debate concerning narrow vs. wide definitions of social protection, as also between pure welfare (or social assistance) and livelihood promoting definitions (Conway & Norton, 2002; Norton *et al.*, 2002). Safety nets correspond closest to a narrow, purely welfare, remit for social protection. Yet safety nets are full of holes (Devereux, 2002b), and one of the biggest of these is the able-bodied labour requirement of food-for-work and cash-for-work schemes which exclude hungry and destitute people that are unable to work (the elderly, disabled, women caring for small children etc) (McCord, 2008). The scale and persistence of the deprivation problem in many low income countries point in the direction of a wider remit (as indicated by the above classification), but this also then makes it difficult to know where to draw the line between social transfers and development policies. For example, fertilizer subsidies to vulnerable small poor farmers rather awkwardly straddle the interface between social protection and development policy.

Another branch of the definitional discussion has concerned itself with whether social protection is primarily argued from a needs or a rights perspective (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2007; Munro, 2008). A great proportion of the vulnerability literature is concerned with material deprivation and the risk of becoming unable to secure adequate food. From this perspective, social protection is an instrument to secure food security and possibly more durable enhancements in future livelihood capabilities. An alternative view is that freedom from hunger and destitution is an inalienable human right that should be legislated as such by national governments (as, indeed, it is in many instances) and delivered as a legal obligation of the state. While quite a lot of heat is generated by different stances taken in this discussion, the two views (as indeed many intermediate positions) are essentially complementary to each other, and the responsibilities of government towards ensuring that all citizens have freedom from hunger and access to basic needs can be grounded in both sets of arguments. With respect to future research, these different stances arise again in new forms. For example, the intense current interest in establishing links between social protection and pro-poor growth seems to be partly to do with presenting instrumentalist (rather than rights) arguments to governments in favour of more predictable and consistent social protection policies. Likewise, the research area of politics and financing social protection is partly to do with elevating the rights perspective on social protection within governments. At the level of particular social protection approaches, social pensions have the particular feature of establishing the pension in law as a right that governments then cannot renege on as they are able to do with some other types of social transfer.

DFID defines social protection as encompassing social assistance (including social transfers), social insurance, and minimum labour standards.<sup>1</sup> This is fine as far as it goes, but it does miss a lot of the richness in the literature concerning what social protection sets out to achieve, and what closely adjacent public functions and services (for example, education and health) should be excluded or included from its scope. The difficulties lie in social transfers rather in social insurance or minimum labour standards (the latter being particularly strongly grounded in rights). Transfers can take the form of food, cash, inputs or assets. Some of these aim ostensibly at the welfare end of intentions (food, some level of cash) while others plainly aim at livelihood promotion (more cash, inputs, assets). From the viewpoint of a future

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<sup>1</sup> As set out on p.1 of the Terms of Reference for this study.

research programme it may be safest to stick with DFID's rather neutral formulation, while recognising that both instrumental and rights arguments for institutionalising social protection are legitimate to explore in future research, as are a range of delivery methods including inputs and assets as well as food and cash. If definition is considered an issue due to the necessity to put boundaries around permissible research topics, this might be done better by excluding certain obvious adjacent policy domains (like mainstream health and education) rather than by over-proscribing what counts as social protection.

The past five years has seen a massive surge of interest in cash transfers as the principle vehicle for delivering social protection. This occurred in part due to the recurrence of small, medium, and widespread food crises in eastern and southern Africa dating from 2000 onwards, and the limited range of policy levers available to deal with these crises, basically food transfers organised by the World Food Programme (WFP). Emergency food operations are unpredictable and costly, and lead to exit strategy problems once the initial crisis has passed. Moreover, they do not address and may even worsen the vulnerability contexts that cause them to occur, for example by undermining local food markets. It began to be argued that since the vulnerability problem being addressed seemed to be widespread and persistent, and due to multiple causes small and large, might it not be better addressed by some form of continuous transfer that would enable beneficiaries to withstand minor and routine shocks, thus only necessitating food aid in the event of serious catastrophes of wide geographic scope. And so the principle of 'predictable funding for predictable needs' emerged, with regular cash transfers to the poorest and most vulnerable members of society replacing (except in exceptional circumstances) *ad hoc* and intermittent deliveries of food aid.

In a rather polarised debate about the relative merits of cash and food transfers, positive qualities of cash have been contrasted to negative qualities of food (Farrington & Slater, 2006). Cash is argued to be lower cost to deliver, provide choice and empowerment (over its expenditure) to its beneficiaries, and to support rather than undermine local markets. Nevertheless, these conceptual qualities are not necessarily easy to realise in practice and they do not cover all circumstances. Security of delivery is a major issue with cash, and in some instances it has compromised the personal safety of beneficiaries. Moreover, in remote locations with insufficient food supply and poorly working markets, there is a risk that cash will provoke rising food prices. It is on occasions apposite to remind cash enthusiasts that a cash transfer is as good for its recipients as the food it is able to buy. In the meantime, this debate has had the perhaps unexpected and laudable consequence of modifying the operational behaviour of WFP towards local rather than remote food purchases and recognition of a role for cash transfers in its own programming (Gentilini, 2007). The advent of global food shortages and higher priced food in international markets is likely to influence the cash vs. food balance of arguments in new directions, and constitutes an area which merits research in its own right.

The purpose of pilot social cash transfers, such as that set up in Zambia in 2004 and extended to Malawi in 2006 (and soon to be done on a rather larger scale in Kenya, on which more in due course), is to test the modalities of providing predictable transfers to the most destitute households in countries with chronically poor and highly vulnerable populations. These design modalities include identifying the best targeting methods for reaching the most destitute, experimenting with different mechanisms for transferring cash securely to beneficiaries, and getting cash transfers embedded in government delivery institutions. It is fairly safe to say that despite nearly five years experience with pilots, there remain many critical unresolved factors in their scaling up.

The Zambia and Malawi pilots have chosen to focus on the absence of able-bodied labour in the household, taken together with various other proxies of destitution (elderly-, widow-, child-, disabled-headed households, eating only one meal a day etc.) in order to restrict transfers to the 'bottom 10%' of all households (Schubert & Goldberg, 2004; Schubert & Huijbregts, 2006). This is all very well as a means of keeping the cost of transfers within politically feasible boundaries for government budgets (if scaled up), but has some serious flaws. Even if 10 per cent approximates a national proportion of the truly destitute (according to the criteria) it is entirely improbable to do so uniformly across geographical and social space, so that its uniform application results in wrong inclusion or exclusion depending on underlying variations in destitution in different places. In addition the mere presence of able-bodied labour in the household is no guarantee that the labour is able to secure above-destitution income levels. Finally, an inspection of the rural income distribution in Zambia or Malawi shows that roughly US\$2 per capita per month separates each of the bottom five deciles of the distribution, meaning that if the cash transfer by design or mistake exceeds US\$2 per capita per month, it is likely to 'leapfrog' some proportion of the bottom 10 per cent above the next poorest decile, with socially invidious consequences (Ellis, 2008).

It is possible that destitution targeting is the wrong route for workable cash transfers, and that categorical targeting (such as social pensions) provide an alternative with less problematic social side-effects. The different alternatives need to be looked at more rigorously than hitherto by reference to available demographic data (from population censuses) and household budget data (from large scale household income and expenditure surveys). This remains an under-researched area, especially with respect to cross-country comparisons within SSA as well as across South Asia. Destitution targeting may also fail to reach mobile and marginalised populations such as migrant fisherfolk (Alison & Seeley, 2004; Seeley & Gardner, 2007)

The pilot cash transfers have also experimented with different cash delivery mechanisms, but they are not the only social transfers to think innovatively in this respect. A lot has been learnt from the seasonal cash transfers implemented by Concern Universal in Malawi (the FACT and DECT projects described in Devereux, 2008). In particular, the DECT project experimented successfully with issuing smartcards to beneficiaries, allowing cash withdrawals from mobile ATMs, organised by a private development bank. Combining cash transfers with private banking capabilities opens up interesting financial market development prospects that need proper investigation in cooperation with the private banking sector itself. Cell phone networks likewise offer considerable potential for using new technology to deliver cash transfers to beneficiaries while avoiding leakages of cash in transit (Freeland, 2006; Porteous, 2006). Again there are private sector projects that would repay detailed examination in regard to this potential, such as the M-PESA system in Kenya<sup>2</sup>. The Kenya Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) which is in effect a predictable cash transfer rather than a typical safety net, proposes to use the private Equity Bank, smartcards, and point-of-use card readers as its means of delivering cash to beneficiaries.

From the foregoing, it is evident that although a lot has been learned about social protection delivery in the past 10 or 15 years, there remain many important unresolved aspects that would repay further research. Many of these unresolved aspects are to do with scaling up social transfers from small pilots. In all low income countries there exists an extensive

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/News/files/mobile-phone-banking-kenya.asp>

experience of social protection delivery on the small scale, most often implemented by NGOs. This applies across cash, food, inputs and asset transfers, and indeed some NGOs deliver multiple types of transfer within individual social protection projects. However, NGO projects tend to be time-bound (perhaps 2-3 years maximum time horizon) and space-bound (covering a relatively small number of districts and communities). No matter how successful they are at achieving what they set out to do (and the best NGOs excel at what they do), the outreach is often tiny in comparison to the scale of the problem being addressed, and the management intensity they are able to apply to the task could not possibly be replicated in the public sector and at broad scale. Another most important aspect of such efforts is that their monitoring ceases at the point of successful delivery of the designated transfers to the promised beneficiaries, so that there is scarcely any evidence on the longer term effects of the transfers on the lives and livelihoods of their beneficiaries. This is a very substantial knowledge gap, which is duly prioritised in later discussion in this report.

An exception to the general smallness of scale of NGO social protection projects is BRAC in Bangladesh which has a substantive record both in innovative delivery and in scaling up (Matin & Yasmin, 2004; Sulaiman & Matin 2006). BRAC has shown that asset transfers can be an effective way of helping the families of ultra poor women to establish new livelihood options, when combined with skill training and short-term stipends while new enterprises are being established. By the end of the first phase in 2006 of its Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Project in 2006, the approach had been scaled up to 15 districts, and a second phase is scaling up to reach the poorest households in 40 districts. While the project has been successful in helping poor women escape from extreme poverty, the vast majority remain very poor and vulnerable to shocks. The DFID-funded Chars Livelihood Programme in Bangladesh also offers important lessons in cash transfers, innovation and scaling up.

A further ongoing debate in social transfers concerns dimensions of dependency and graduation (Matin & Hulme, 2003). The pessimistic view is that social transfers render people increasingly incapable of building or rebuilding their own livelihoods (dependency), and therefore they become ever less likely to 'graduate' from requiring transfers. Some governments are concerned a lot about graduation, since they would prefer to consider the financial commitment to supporting people who are unable to meet their minimum food and basic needs requirements as temporary, and they would therefore also like to see an exit strategy built into the design of any large scale transfer programme.

As with all topics in social protection, there are multiple different angles and entry points to dependency and graduation. For food transfers, available evidence does not support the dependency hypothesis (Abdulai, 2005). Some types of cash transfer, for example social pensions, clearly cannot have any expectation of graduation; however, their budgetary provision is predictable given known age threshold and mortality parameters. Cash transfers to the destitute seem likely to represent mixed prospects for graduation since some categories of the destitute may have capabilities to lift themselves from ultra-poverty and others not. One of the arguments put in favour of cash transfers (as opposed to food transfers) is the ability of recipients to choose to save and invest rather than consume part of the transfer. However, a transfer of sufficient size for this to happen may be prone to leapfrogging the incomes of nearly-as-poor non-beneficiaries, as mentioned earlier. Pilot transfer schemes should really be tracking quite carefully the expenditure patterns of samples of recipients in order to test unverified propositions about the options that cash makes possible (a research gap). However, few of them do this with sufficient accuracy, for example, in the Kazungula and Chipata social cash transfer pilots in Zambia data was collected on the count frequency

of spending by beneficiaries on different commodity groups (food, medicines etc.), but not the amount, nor the share, of the transfer devoted to each of these categories of purchase (Ellis, 2007).

The current enthusiasm for cash transfers in SSA represents, in part, the transmission of ideas from the Latin American experience with conditional cash transfers (CCTs) (Slater & Schubert, 2006). During the 1990s, pilot CCT schemes in Brazil and Mexico were scaled up to national programmes (the *Bolsa Escola* and *Oportunidades* respectively). CCTs broke with traditional forms of social assistance in Latin America (a) by providing transfers as small monthly cash payments rather than as goods, (b) paying money directly to mothers of young children, rather than household heads, and (c) requiring beneficiaries to comply with conditionalities, typically to do with the school or health clinic attendance of children, although in some instances very much more complicated conditions apply (for example the main CCT in Chile includes 53 separate conditions) (Britto, 2008). Evaluations of the big Latin American CCTs have generally been positive with minor caveats across a range of indicators (Rawlings & Rubio, 2005) such as low corruption, accuracy of targeting, poverty impacts, school attendance (human capital benefits), and empowerment of women beneficiaries (Molyneux, 2007). CCTs have been adopted in many Latin American countries, becoming the preferred model for implementing social transfers in the region.

However, when translated to SSA contexts, the conditionality has rather quickly been dropped from the cash transfer, with many commentators strongly opposed (Freeland, 2007). One argument is that conditionalities are inappropriate in circumstances where the social services on offer are of such limited capacity and poor quality as to make imposing conditions to attend them quite infeasible and irrelevant. A broader argument locates itself more in individual freedom to make responsible choices. In the social cash transfer pilots in Zambia and Malawi, the notion of conditionality is put into reverse, with families given an extra incentive payment if their children attend school (e.g. Schubert & Huijbregts, 2006), as contrasted with the CCT condition of school attendance as a requirement for getting the basic transfer. Like other contemporary debates in social protection, the conditionality discussion at times seems rather excessively polarised by the desire of different authors to put clear water between each other. In fact, many types of transfer require a condition of one sort or another. For example, social pensions require a condition (reaching a certain age) in order to participate, as also does a food- or cash-for-work seasonal safety net (participating in a work gang). More to the point in the context of this report, little work has been done on how well CCTs perform in small poor Latin America countries (such as Honduras or Nicaragua) where conditions might be more comparable to a typical SSA country than in Brazil or Mexico. This point is picked up again in the research pre-design.

As indicated by this brief synopsis on CCTs, as also by the earlier mention of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) in India, there are distinctive regional variations in the majority approach to social assistance between the main developing regions. These variations no doubt reflect historical precedents and accidental factors, but they also importantly reflect major differences in relative levels of development, income distribution, and rates of economic growth. In India, the current policy discussion is to spend one per cent of GDP on social protection, a figure that immediately invites vigorous debate (why one, rather than two or three per cent?), indicating yet another important knowledge gap. And on this note, we now turn from the literature review to the knowledge gaps in social protection.

## **Knowledge Gaps**

Certain knowledge gaps arise from the literature review just undertaken, while others arise from the nearly 90 interviews conducted by the research scoping team either face-to-face, or by telephone, or as responses to key questions circulated by email (see Annex A). Fortunately, knowledge gaps are not scattered all over the map of what we would like to know, or could possibly know, about social protection. Both the literature review and interview responses fall into patterns of key unknowns that a wide variety of stakeholders regard as priority areas for future social protection research.

As suggested at the outset of this report, few respondents are nowadays concerned with the case for social protection (the ‘why’ of social protection), since this is now established in extensive literatures covering multiple different facets of poverty, risk, vulnerability, destitution, needs and rights. Many respondents remain concerned, however, with future improvements in design and delivery (the ‘how’ of social protection). The largest proportion of respondents would like to see social protection research forge ahead into new areas that are hitherto relatively under-researched. The majority patterns of research interest revealed by the consultations can be grouped into the following five main areas of future research. This can be regarded as the core list of knowledge gaps requiring prospective research:

- (1) design and delivery of social transfers
- (2) micro economic and social impacts of social transfers
- (3) macro impacts and linkages, including pro-poor growth effects
- (4) politics and financing of social protection
- (5) environmental change and social protection, including climate change

### *(1) Design and Delivery of Social Transfers*

Design and delivery are two sides of the same coin: design sets out a proposed model for reaching a particular set of objectives (typically, a level of transfers to a designated group of beneficiaries), and delivery gives practical effect to the design including making changes in order to deal with problems that the design fails to foresee. In a long running social protection programme it is to be expected that delivery may end up having evolved quite a long way from original design, due to the process of learning by doing. Both design and delivery are concerned with the criteria and processes for selecting beneficiaries (targeting), the logistical and technical methods for making transfers, the sequencing of different social protection instruments (e.g. combinations of food, cash, inputs, assets, credit etc.), and downstream planning such as exit or graduation. At the front end of all these are several conceptual and strategic issues that could be placed more squarely in design rather than delivery, and these include the question of scope: universal, categorical, targeted etc.

It is the view of a considerable proportion of respondents to questions about knowledge gaps that design and delivery still suffer from incomplete information and represent a fertile area for further research. The main sub-topics proposed, the reasons for posing them, and notes where applicable on methods for researching them, are summarised as follows:

- (i) Scope. The choice between universal, categorical or targeted transfers remains an area where there seems to be a considerable amount of confusion amongst policy advocates and practitioners, and more clarity about the nature of such choices is much desired. While this is at one level a design issue, it also crosses over into politics, the state and citizen-state compact, which comes under the third research area delineated below. In order to avoid this choice remaining in the realm of conceptual discussion (or merely

reflecting particular stances taken on rights), cross regional and cross-country comparative study of the pluses and minuses of projects and programmes that represent the range of alternatives is indicated.

- (ii) Targeting. Both categorical and targeted transfers imply some level of targeting. In the case of categorical transfers (e.g. social pensions or child support benefits), the targeting criteria are kept as simple as possible – the minimum needed to define the category (e.g. age thresholds or age ranges). With more precise targeting, the criteria can become increasingly complex; however, little is known about the true accuracy of such targeting and the extent of inclusion or exclusion errors. In addition, important institutional considerations arise in precision targeting, including the effectiveness (and social impacts of) community participation in compiling beneficiary lists. There remain unanswered questions, and these can only be resolved by detailed examination of the practice of targeting and its outcomes across a sample of social transfer projects and programmes. A particular unresearched topic in targeting concerns mobile populations that are not reached by residence-based beneficiary selection processes.
- (iii) Innovation in Delivery. This applies especially to cash transfers but may also arise in other contexts. Its central focus is the use of electronic technologies (smartcards, cell phones) to make transfers to beneficiaries. This also overlaps with a further research category in this list (private sector participation) and might be regarded as a joint research area. It makes sense to examine how these technologies are being used in non-social protection contexts (of the type exemplified by M-PESA in Kenya) in order to bridge gaps and learn lessons between the experience of private and social transfers. Electronic technologies may not be the only area for innovation in delivery, and exploration of alternative institutional channels could also be explored, including linkages with treatment programmes such as anti-retroviral therapy.
- (iv) Graduation and Sequencing. As discussed in the literature review, graduation is an issue that exercises many governments, and is also linked to worries about dependency in long run social protection programmes. Graduation is hitherto poorly articulated and researched; it remains more in the realm of conceptual discussion than informed analysis of real experiences in which it has been trialled. In time-bound social protection projects, graduation can occur rather forcibly and abruptly, simply by project cessation. There is much talk about sequencing e.g. moving beneficiaries in phases from unconditional transfers to skills training or microfinance schemes, yet little evidence exists to show whether these ideas are workable or not. There may again be scope for important cross-regional lesson learning in this area.
- (v) Public Sector Capabilities. While these occur at the aggregate level and come under politics and the state, they are also important at the local level of transfer delivery. Issues of governance, motivation and incentives have been seldom discussed but, as all practitioners know, they are in reality rather critical, and even more so when scaling up is contemplated. The experience in recent pilot social cash transfer projects (Zambia, Malawi) might repay detailed examination, since it is not clear how readily these types of scheme can be scaled up without resolving important issues of district and lower level governance on the part of officials, community leaders and community welfare committees.

- (vi) Private Sector Engagement. As already suggested this links closely to the sub-topic of innovation in delivery. In practice, the private sector comes to be involved in quite a lot of social protection, for example, in the logistics of food or input delivery, or in redeeming vouchers at input fairs or in village shops. However, the more interesting angle is that of financial services, and the possibility that private sector involvement can draw the poor and vulnerable into access to micro-insurance, savings and loans via private handling of transfers. As in innovative delivery, case studies in this area need not be restricted to social transfers, since lessons can be learnt from private efforts to provide a range of banking services to the poor. The role of regulatory systems in either stifling or facilitating private sector contributions to financial inclusion and innovative delivery systems was flagged by several respondents as a key research area.
- (vii) Scaling Up. Scaling up is partly a design and delivery issue, and partly a matter of politics and finance. It could be located in either or both branches of a social protection research portfolio. Scaling up has occurred in CCT schemes in Latin America, the NREGS in India, and CFPR in Bangladesh. In Africa, social cash transfer pilots are supposed to pave the way for scaling up, but it remains unclear as to the true feasibility of achieving this. Scaling up undoubtedly constitutes a valid area for future research, but needs clever thinking about how to study it effectively in order to avoid making false inferences based on inapplicable cross-regional comparisons.

## (2) Micro Level Impacts

Perhaps the weakest aspect of social protection practice over the past 10-15 years has been the failure to monitor the downstream impacts on the welfare and well-being of beneficiaries arising from social protection projects and programmes (so-called impact evaluation). While monitoring and evaluation has long been insisted upon as a requirement of scheme design, this has tended to confine itself almost exclusively to monitoring the roll-out of the project itself, and evaluating performance by success at achieving stated project outreach. For time limited projects (the majority of NGO projects funded by donors), the monitoring function ceases abruptly when the scheme winds up.

For this reason, especially in SSA, exceedingly little is known about the true effects (and effectiveness) of the multiple experiments in social protection that have been tried out on beneficiaries by different agencies in different time periods. Surprisingly, amongst the worst offenders in this regard are farm input delivery schemes (free or subsidised packages of farm inputs) where typically not even the crop yields secured in the harvest following the transfer are recorded.

Impact evaluation raises interesting issues about research methods. In the first place, well designed tracking of key household indicators should occur throughout the time span of a social transfer, taking off from baseline data collected before the project started. This tracking should continue substantially beyond project cessation, for otherwise claims can be made about effectiveness that are not verifiable by reference to the future lives and livelihoods of beneficiaries. Secondly, comparisons between recipients and non-recipients can potentially be built into the transfer design (for example, in relation to phased programme roll-out), thus emulating randomised experimental design while avoiding ethically dubious comparisons between recipients and non-recipients in the same communities. IFPRI have developed methods to overcome the failure to do this in social transfer design, but inevitably these provide less decisive comparisons than could be achieved with prior planning. It must be accepted that tracking methods are long duration, and to the extent that research is

commissioned in this area, a 3-5 year time horizon would be considered the minimum acceptable duration. Tracking studies can collect demographic, economic and social data using quantitative and qualitative research tools. Some of the micro effects of social transfers on which tracking studies could shed light are as follows:

- (i) Household Demography. How does receipt of cash transfers (including categorical transfers like social pensions and child support grants) affect the composition of the household, and does changing household composition widen options for economic participation? For example, South African evidence suggests that a pension may make it easier for younger adult members of recipient families to seek work in the labour market, and also for family members to start up enterprises (although more work is needed on both these tentative findings). Changing household demography has implications for the sharing of transfers between family members, household dependency ratios, gender and labour markets. However, links between these changes and household dynamics are complex, context-specific and under-researched.
- (ii) Expenditure Patterns. The changing patterns of household expenditure induced by the receipt of cash transfers is critical both for understanding the welfare effects of transfers within households, and for making the micro-macro linkages between transfers and the larger economy (therefore crossing over to growth impacts to be discussed in due course). There is a gender dimension here, too, since women are often selected as recipients of transfers, and unresolved questions surround the implications of this for income sharing in the household. In addition the degree to which savings and asset building do indeed occur as a result of cash transfers (a frequently hypothesised but unproven benefit of cash transfers) can potentially be resolved by well-designed expenditure and asset tracking. Finally, the seasonality effects of continuous cash transfers are under-researched and poorly understood, yet in farming communities are likely to be critical due to significant seasonal cycles in food access and market prices.
- (iii) Asset Building. Leading on from the preceding sub-topic numerous unresolved questions surround the nature of asset building that can occur from social transfers (of different types), and which types of asset building might be more constructive to encourage than other types. In CCTs it is assumed that human capital building has priority (the health and education of children), and there may be the kernel of something important about intergenerational poverty reduction within this, even if conditionality is not considered the appropriate way of going about achieving that objective. Do social transfers achieve asset building (including intergenerational human capital), and which types do this best, and what design features can assist this outcome from social transfers? Does asset building require other interventions in combination with social protection transfers, and how can these be best combined.
- (iv) Community Impacts. Requiring different methodological tools (participatory methods), the social effects in the community of social transfers are a neglected and under-researched dimension. Practitioners often note social divisiveness caused by beneficiary selection, especially with respect to destitution targeting in which community members may not themselves perceive the subtle differences in circumstances that outsiders deploy to separate beneficiaries from non-beneficiaries. An ongoing debate concerns whether external transfers ‘crowd-out’ (i.e. substitute for) assistance that would otherwise have been received from kinship networks or the community more broadly (Heemskerk *et al.*, 2004). While fragmentary evidence suggests that crowding out is

exaggerated, this is nevertheless not a systematically researched area and offers the potential for some worthwhile new work to be undertaken.

- (v) Tracking Pension Recipients. A place where several of the foregoing strands come together is in the evolving circumstances of households in which at least one member receives a social pension. Pensions can create demographic changes in households and can be hypothesized to help a lot more poor and vulnerable people than the recipients themselves. Evidence from South Africa (which needs verifying in other contexts) suggests that pension income may make it easier for younger adult members of families to enter the labour market, when this involves migrating away from home. In addition, little is known about the welfare implications for other household members when pension recipients die and the steady cash income into the household abruptly ceases, so tracking studies need to do this follow up too.
- (vi) Labour Standards. Several research scoping respondents pointed to an interesting research area in the relationship between labour standards in formal employment and the role of social protection in the informal economy. Specifically, erosion of labour standards can mean that formal sector employees are no longer able to help their non-formal sector families, therefore increasing the necessity for social protection in the informal sector. This erosion may even occur as a consequence of social protection, if the private sector perceives that its own obligations towards employees can be eroded because the state will take care of the welfare consequences of such action.

While these sub-topics in the micro level effects of social transfers are differentiated from each other in the foregoing list, as a research proposition longitudinal studies (household tracking) are capable of collecting the basic data covering most of these different angles simultaneously. It is worth mentioning that the Kenya Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) intends to carry out baseline and tracking surveys on households from project start-up in November 2008. It would seem obvious for a future research programme in social protection to fairly quickly develop a supportive and complementary relationship with the HSNP, especially given its innovative design, its phased roll-out to beneficiaries, and its intention, subject to interim reviews, to run for ten years.

### (3) *Macro Level Impacts*

Perhaps the most popular of all knowledge gaps identified by respondents in the research scoping exercise was the desire to be better informed about the growth linkages of social protection. In part this derives from a genuine interest in whether or not social transfers of different types can contribute to pro-poor growth, and in part it is attributable to an advocacy agenda whereby proof of positive pro-poor growth impacts can be utilised to persuade otherwise reluctant governments to take on the obligation of providing scaled up social protection.

Tracing the growth impacts of social transfers is fraught with methodological problems, and this in itself might constitute a research topic on its own. A limited amount of headway can be achieved through micro economic data collection (see preceding research area), since labour market, asset building and expenditure effects can help to construct scaled up estimates in addition to measuring household level impacts. In particular, expenditure data lends itself to estimating local multipliers using simplified versions of social accounting matrices (see Malawi citation). At a more aggregate level it is debated (and debatable) to what degree computable general equilibrium (CGE) models can provide robust estimates of

the growth impacts of social transfers, due to their sensitivity to small changes in key parameters that are themselves prone to aggregation and estimation problems. However, improved micro level data coupled with innovation in methods may make progress on this score. Research sub-topics under this heading are as follows:

- (i) Methods for Linking Transfers to Growth. Since the growth impacts of social protection are such a prized quest, methodological work on how best to generate estimates of such impacts, building on micro level data, merits research funding within any large scale programme. This should go beyond funding researchers that are already fixated on an existing toolbox of approaches towards methodological innovation in this area. In particular, transparency in modelling is critical (something often missing from CGE work), so that users of results can see clearly see which linkages are supported by firm data and which depend on heroic assumptions needed to achieve model closure
- (ii) Estimating Growth Impacts. This follows from the preceding sub-topic and would probably in practice be combined with it. Using micro level tracking data and innovative methods what can reasonably firmly be said about the pro-poor growth impacts of social transfer programmes? A distinction needs to be made between actual growth impacts of already scaled up social transfers (e.g. social pensions in some countries), and potential growth impacts of scaling up pilot cash transfers (based on the micro tracking data associated with the pilots).
- (iii) Agriculture and Social Protection. Much social protection takes place in rural areas and if input transfers are allowed within the remit of social protection then direct impacts on agricultural output can be effected by such transfers. While some work has already been done in this area (Dorward & Sabates-Wheeler, 2007; Devereux, 2008; Slater & Farrington, 2008), there exists scope for more serious and sustained empirical investigation than has occurred to date (where the arguments have tended to be rather conceptual in character) on the roles social protection initiatives can play in reducing seasonal vulnerability among the agriculture-dependent poor. Questions of complementarity and conflict between different types of social transfer operating simultaneously or in sequence are important here, as well as coordination between different public sector actors promoting different transfers (in particular, social assistance vs. agricultural development actors).
- (iv) Poverty Impacts of Cash Transfers. How far do cash transfers of a particular amount lift their recipients towards the poverty line. This requires work using available household income and expenditure data sets, from which poverty indicators are derived, linked to the beneficiary group that is in receipt of cash transfers. Poverty impacts of scaling up can be inferred as well as other interesting aspects. Expenditure tracking data may also enable something to be said about cumulative effects of cash transfers on the poverty status of beneficiaries, and, by extension, towards the achievement of the poverty MDGs.
- (v) Food Crisis Impacts. It is not clear whether food crisis impacts belong under micro or macro linkages of social transfers, nor whether the fairly frequent mention of them by research scoping respondents means that they should be included in a research programme. Yet the rise in the world price of staple foods, and the possibility that this may have ushered in a longer term era of more constrained food supplies and higher real food prices than in the past three decades, does have significant linkages to ongoing social protection policy discussion. For one thing, it may alter the terms of the debate

between food and cash, making food transfers more valuable than cash for achieving social protection in particular circumstances. However, this needs to be thought through by reference to real economies and real food markets. For another thing, within cash transfers a lot more attention than in the recent past may need to be paid to indexing mechanisms (adjusting cash to food price changes). There is certainly scope for research in this area, but its relative prioritisation must be for others to decide.

#### (4) *Politics and Financing*

This is a large area that could potentially be sub-divided, yet politics and consistent public funding are ultimately so closely related that the choice is made to treat them as a single bundle of research priorities here. In particular, unless there is political weight thrown behind scaled up social protection programmes, there is little chance that they will be fully implemented, or, if reluctantly implemented, they are unlikely to be sustained. Both the politics and the financing of social protection were frequently mentioned by research scoping respondents, and this interest occurred equally for the two main regions investigated, Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Some prospective research areas under this joint heading are as follows:

- (i) Politics. The politics of social protection contains three interlocking aspects that can in some respects be treated as separate sub-topics, or alternatively be bundled together. The first is the politics of establishing social protection: why has social protection taken different forms and received different levels of priority in different countries? How are decisions made and policy processes played out? How are alternatives weighed up? What role do factors other than perceived affordability play? The second is the politics of delivering social protection: this refers to governance (see next sub-topic). The third is the politics of sustaining social protection: how can social protection schemes survive change in political (and economic) circumstances? How can financing be sustainable? To what extent can social protection lead to positive feedback loops based on strengthening notions of entitlement, citizenship, political rights? (these also listed as separate sub-topics below).
- (ii) Governance. Governance acts as a bridge between politics, citizens and the state, on the one hand, and the funding of social protection, on the other. Governance also links to alternative transmission mechanisms for transfers, to private-public roles in transfer delivery, and to the way public institutional channels function between central and local government. Good governance in social protection means cost efficient delivery of transfers with minimum leakages, transparency in financial accounting of schemes and programmes, fairness in beneficiary selection without prejudice to location or ethnicity (where targeting is concerned), and reliability in routine delivery to beneficiaries. Again, comparative lesson learning from different settings may be the appropriate way forward for taking forward the understanding of what factors tend to ensure good governance, or in their absence, tend to result in bad governance of social transfers.
- (iii) Citizenship and the State. Many commentators see social protection as an important manifestation of the compact between state and citizen. This is often approached from rights perspectives (the legal and ethical obligations of the state to its citizens); however, it is the politics of achieving this settlement that is critical and relatively under-researched. There is scope for approaching this by comparing different country contexts and historical processes, given that some even very poor states have found it politically advantageous to institute legally enforceable social transfers (e.g. Lesotho pensions)

while others are nowhere near able to do this. Cross-regional experiences could be valuable in this regard (including the politics of social protection in poorer Latin American countries). A mixture of closely related research interests come into this sub-topic including politics, political choice, citizen and state, state building and what to do in fragile states.

- (iv) Financing. Financing could incorporate a great number of different things, especially given the complex relationships between donors and governments in countries receiving general budget support. One branch of financing is the issue of ‘affordability’, which essentially comes down to being able to demonstrate to governments how different levels of social protection impact on government budgets, and how funding can be sustained in the future. Only fragmentary work has so far been done in this area, and a systematic examination of the relationship between outreach (coverage of beneficiaries), level of transfer, and budgetary impacts is an important research task to perform, across a range of different country settings. Interestingly this was a knowledge gap raised as strongly in India as in SSA countries.
- (v) Social Protection Indices. It is not certain whether this belongs under politics and finance, or should be located elsewhere in a portfolio of potential research topics. The ADB has developed a social protection index, measuring a variety of different government actions on the social protection front in order to compile a single indicator comparable across countries. The purpose of such an indicator is of course to encourage lagging governments to raise their game to levels approaching the best performing governments in social protection provision. The development of a similar indicator for Africa has been discussed by the AU, apparently. A potential research project is to examine the validity and robustness of the construction of such indices, and therefore contribute to improved practice in their construction and use in the future.

Implicit in many of the comments received in this topic area is recognition of the need to address a fundamental problem in the way social protection is conceived and planned, that “technical” approaches predominate which are blind to the political and historical realities of the context that interventions are intended to influence, and which can often end up reinforcing the very structures and mechanisms which underpin social exclusion and impoverishment. These views point to a need for research, building on earlier “drivers of change” studies, on how dynamic political and institutional circumstances can affect the prospects for social protection initiatives being adopted and succeeding in specific contexts. Some of the aspects highlighted by research scoping respondents for particular attention are:

- the nature of the overall political system, going beyond the state and electoral politics to encompass informal political processes and patterns of patronage as well as formal policy statements and structures: how do these impact on actual implementation?
- capacities for budget scrutiny by parliaments and civil society, and effectiveness in curbing patronage and rent-seeking;
- roles for decentralised structures of governance, including CBOs and traditional authorities;
- the changing architecture of aid and international relations: conditionality, harmonization and influence on accountability of governments;
- how to build political awareness into the design of donor support for social protection, and link social protection activities with moves towards greater political participation.

(5) *Environment and Climate Change*

The second most-mentioned knowledge gap in social protection after growth impacts is climate change. Nevertheless, most respondents simply felt that this was an important emerging research area without being able to articulate very clearly what precisely should be investigated within it. An important caveat about including climate change in this list of prioritized research topics is the potential for duplication and overlap with climate change research funding which is already in train under DFID funding. Nevertheless, during the consultations that underlie this report, some interesting ideas were raised regarding innovative approaches to social insurance that arise as much in relation to ongoing environmental change, as to the broader and longer term horizon of climate change.

DFID has already commissioned some conceptual work on climate change and social protection (Slater *et al.*, 2007; Davies *et al.*, 2008). The links turn on the contributions that social protection can make to the long term adaptability of poor and vulnerable people to more frequent and persistent environmental shocks than they have had to confront in the past. Nevertheless in specific locations the livelihood threats of climate change are exceedingly difficult to anticipate (for example the reliability of rainfall may improve in some places, while declining in others). Social protection in the form of cash transfers improves adaptation to climate change just as it also improves adaptation to economic shocks and adverse trends, by widening the options available to people otherwise overwhelmingly constrained by the immediate business of survival. Two topics that arise in this area are as follows:

- (i) Contingency Financing. This interesting research area comprises the scope for using index-based insurance instruments for triggering social transfers in the event of environmental shocks. Such schemes work by establishing easily verifiable indices that are closely correlated with adverse impacts, and threshold levels for them beyond which social insurance payouts to scheme participants will be triggered. Index-based crop insurance has been piloted in a number of countries (e.g. India, Ukraine, Malawi and Ethiopia) using weather as an index, with payouts triggered when cumulative rainfall falls below threshold levels at critical points in the crop cycle. Learning from a pilot already underway in Mongolia, an index-based livestock insurance scheme in northern Kenya has been proposed by ILRI as a sub-component of the HSNP, with average livestock mortality as an index for asset replacement insurance, and forage availability indices (e.g. from remote sensing) for asset protection insurance, possibly in the form of feed vouchers. The rationale is one of preventing the 'vulnerable-near-poor' swelling the numbers dependent on safety-nets when environmental shocks occur. A mixed public-private model is envisaged with 'premiums' being paid by the public sector as a form of social transfer, but the underwriting of the risk being undertaken by the private sector. Such arrangements could be linked to of a wider spectrum of initiatives for financial inclusion and innovative delivery systems for poor and vulnerable populations. Cross-region and multi-country research could achieve important lesson learning about the optimum way to structure and institutionalize this approach.
- (ii) Livelihood Adaptation. As already suggested it seems obvious that social protection can improve the adaptability of its poor and vulnerable recipients, if only by enabling them to lift their horizons above the otherwise desperate and urgent task of survival. Yet a more differentiated, accurate and empirically grounded-portrayal of this effect of social transfers is needed, not just due to the climate change agenda but equally with respect to environmental stresses and shocks from whatever quarter they are emanating. It seems likely that social protection can enhance the adaptability of some recipients more than

others. It also seems likely that particular types of social protection may be more effective than other types in improving adaptation. For example transfers that deliberately set out to improve skills and broaden options may be more successful than transfers that provide cash, no questions asked. However, we do not know this. As pointed out in another context (micro effects of social transfers), unconditional cash transfers can work in complicated ways at the level of demographic and economic substitutions within the household, releasing resources and energies in ways that may not be apparent without careful investigation. It is evident in this context that studies of livelihood adaptation will need either to set up or draw on tracking studies of households, in the same way as a range of other studies on the longer term impacts of social transfers.

## **Scope and Focus of a Research Programme**

### *Overview*

It is not within the terms of reference of this scoping exercise to design a social protection research programme, yet a framework for such a design seems to emerge clearly from the foregoing identification of knowledge gaps and this can be thought of as a ‘pre-design’ statement of the possible scope and focus of the research programme. The strands and topics discussed in the preceding section are summarised in Figure 1. A potential research programme would encompass five core research areas that are described in shorthand as Design & Delivery, Micro Impacts, Macro Impacts, Politics and Finance, and Environment. The latter could alternatively be called Climate Change, nevertheless there are good reasons for not making this part of a research programme synonymous with a climate change agenda, the principal one being that livelihood adaptation is not solely nor even primarily about the ability to adapt to the rather nebulous hazards that are brought about by very long term and gradual climate change, it is mainly about ability to adapt to environmental and economic change occurring over shorter timescales and representing immediate and pressing reasons for people to change their livelihoods.

In addition to the five core research areas, Figure 1 contains a total of 25 ‘research topics’, nested within one or other of the core areas. Since these must again use rather a shorthand description to fit into the diagram, they are reproduced here as a text list:

### **A. Design and Delivery of Social Transfers**

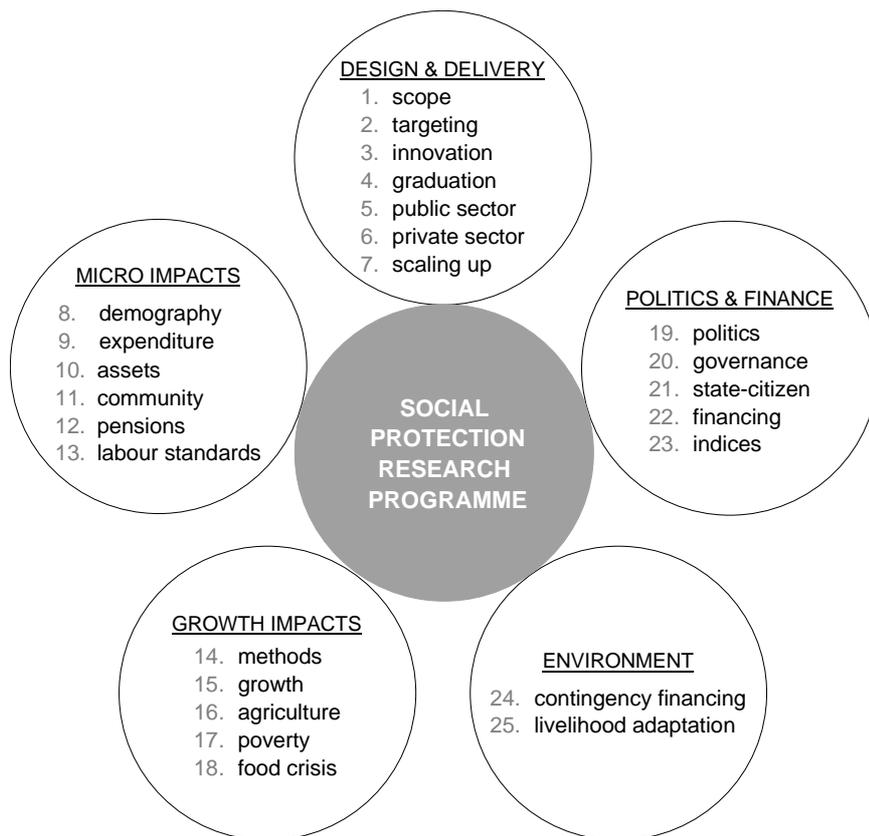
1. Scope: Universal, Categorical, Targeted
2. Targeting
3. Innovation in Delivery
4. Graduation and Sequencing
5. Public Sector Capabilities
6. Private Sector Engagement
7. Scaling Up

### **B. Micro Level Impacts**

8. Household Demography
9. Expenditure Patterns
10. Asset Building
11. Social and Community Impacts
12. Tracking Pension Recipients
13. Labour Standards

- C. Macro Impacts
  - 14. Methods for Linking Transfers to Growth
  - 15. Estimating Growth Impacts
  - 16. Agriculture and Social Protection
  - 17. Poverty Impacts of Social Protection
  - 18. Food Crisis Impacts
- D. Politics and Financing
  - 19. Politics
  - 20. Governance
  - 21. Citizenship and the State
  - 22. Financing
  - 23. Social Protection Indices
- E. Environmental and Climate Change
  - 24. Contingency Financing
  - 25. Livelihood Adaptation

Figure 1: Schematic Representation of a Social Protection Research Programme



*Prioritising Research Topics*

As set out in the foregoing list and in Figure 1, research sub-topics are listed without reference to the relative priority that should be accorded their research funding. The authors of this scoping study have their own ideas about prioritisation, which may, of course, not be

the same as DFID's perceptions or those of others (such as potential bidders for a research programme). Prioritisation is simplified by the ease with which sub-topics can be 'repackaged' in different ways, and because certain sub-topics fit together, either because they represent facets of a larger issue, or because they share the same data collection process. Table 2 below puts forward one possible prioritisation based on repackaging sub-topics in a particular way.

#### *Cross-Cutting Themes*

There are two cross-cutting themes that are insufficiently emphasized by the research scheme as set out in Figure 1. The first of these is gender. While gender differentiated effects were mentioned earlier in relation to micro impacts, it is insufficient for gender to enter social protection research only in an *ad hoc* and fragmented way. Gender has been a major factor in social transfer design for the past 10-15 years as exemplified by the payment of CCTs in Latin America to women in families with young children. Many social cash transfer pilots in Africa have also selected women in households as the recipient of transfers. Gender is critical in child support grants (South Africa) and in pensions given that women often live longer than men. There are implicit gender issues in input transfers in agriculture, even if not identified very clearly as such. While it should not need saying, the gender dimension should be considered an integral part of a majority proportion of the research topics identified in Figure 2, and especially those related to Design & Delivery, Micro Impacts, Environment and Growth Impacts.

The second cross-cutting theme is the rural-urban divide. This is barely mentioned in most of the literature consulted, but was a dimension raised by a number of the research scoping respondents, especially in India and Bangladesh. Social transfer practice is not uniform between rural and urban areas. Some types of social transfer are associated almost exclusively with rural hunger and deprivation, and this includes farm input and asset transfers, and transfers designed to ameliorate adverse seasonality factors in rural areas. Rural areas are associated with remoteness and market failure, factors that can sometimes weigh in favour of food rather than cash transfers. Indeed, an entire ongoing debate concerns food price switching points that lead traders to deliver food to remote rural areas, and whether these occur at price levels that are compatible with using cash transfers as the main form of social protection in remote areas. Meanwhile, urban areas offer options in social protection that may hardly be possible in rural areas, including access to complementary services (education, skills training, health services, financial services). It is possible that the rural-urban divide could enter one or other of the five research areas as a separate topic (most likely design and delivery). On the other hand, it is also a dimension that needs bearing in mind across a range of themes and topics, and one on which as yet unforeseen and innovative research design ideas might arise.

#### *Research Methods*

Research methods have arisen at various points in the preceding description of sub-topics and priority research themes or projects. Essentially two major methodological approaches are called for in a social protection research programme, and these are:

- A. *Household tracking (longitudinal studies)*, including beyond the end of pilot schemes and beyond the death of pensioners in pension-receiving households. An emphasis on longitudinal studies also implies much longer timescales than is usual for policy-related research, and we are talking about 3-5 years minimum for anything useful to be said about the cumulative and eventual impacts of social transfers.

Table 2: A Priority Listing of Social Protection Research Projects

Priority Ranking	Research Projects	Comprising Sub-Topics	Additional Comments
1	Beneficiary Tracking (Longitudinal Studies)	Nos. 8, 9, 10, 12, 25	includes methods for comparing beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries; also resilience and adaptation <u>key sub-project</u> : tracking pension households, including beyond the decease of the pension recipient
2	Politics and Financing of Scaling Up	Nos. 5, 7, 19, 20, 22	scaling up is only partly a design issue, it critically involves politics, governance & financing
3	Growth & Poverty Impacts	Nos. 14, 15, 16, 17	requires methodological innovation as well as calibration, although useful work on poverty impacts can be done with existing tools
4	Innovation & Private Sector Engagement	Nos. 3, 5, 6	<u>focus</u> on electronic delivery & the potential for financial market strengthening created by engaging the banking or cell phone sectors in social transfers
5	Graduation & Sequencing	No. 4	what do we really mean by graduation? if graduation is a sequence of measures, what is this sequence and how can it be managed?
6	Scope & Targeting (links to Scaling Up)	Nos. 1, 2, 3, 7	destitution targeting has flaws that are only just coming to light; <u>key sub-project</u> : targeting mobile populations that are missed from residence-based programmes
7	Citizenship & State	No. 21	social protection as part of the settlement between citizen and state – politics of achieving that settlement; legislating social protection
8	Contingency Financing	No. 24	public-private roles in crop and livestock insurance, providing cover in the event of shocks (crop failure, herd depletion)
9	Public Financing	No. 22	financing models for different scales and coverage of social protection, esp. in SSA but interest in this also in India
10	Labour Standards	No.13	links between eroding labour standards in the formal sector and the need to provide social protection in the informal sector

B. *Cross-region and cross-country comparative research.* A considerable proportion of the research topics identified in the list above require comparative lesson learning between regions and countries, and this was powerfully argued for by many of the scoping respondents. This applies to politics and financing of scaling up, innovation in delivery, graduation and sequencing, citizenship and state, contingency financing, sustainable public financing, and labour standards.

Other methodological considerations and principles arising from the literature review and knowledge gap discussions were as follows:

- (a) longitudinal studies are required to discover the real sustained welfare, well-being and asset building effects of social transfers, as well as their adaptability consequences linked to climate change;
- (b) cross-regional and cross-country lesson learning should encourage comparative insights from developed countries (especially relevant to categorical transfers such as child support payments), and from poorer and smaller Latin American countries, the experiences of which may be more relevant to Africa than the well-known big country examples of Brazil and Mexico.
- (c) research should engage with real social transfer projects and programmes and the policy processes that enabled them to occur, so that findings can, in part, inform better practice as ‘action’ research;
- (d) while being policy relevant, research must be kept separate from advocacy, since advocacy can make for ill-founded policy conclusions and costly mistakes;
- (e) for this reason, amongst others, project proposals should be subject to external peer review and mentoring, and this should be built into research programme design.

### **Institutional Arrangements for Organising Research**

This section of the report covers a range of issues around demand for the research in the south, southern partners, building capabilities, research networks, and stakeholder analysis called for in the terms of reference. It can be pointed out that a large proportion of the research scoping respondents were nationals and residents of countries in the south (Annex A).

There is no doubt that there is immense interest in social protection amongst civil society organisations, rights organisations, NGOs, social action thinktanks, academic research institutions, some governments, donors and a range of international organisations working in low income countries. The demand is huge, and the areas of confusion many. This is really not surprising, and it is certainly not all to do with the enthusiasms of particular donors like DFID. Social protection offers a potential unifying structure for a massive array of very real deprivation around persistent poverty, chronic vulnerability, destitution, child poverty, orphans, people left behind by growth processes (India), post-conflict civil reconstruction and so on. Hitherto all these concerns (and more) have tended to be handled by an array of different, mainly short-term responses, offered by a wide variety of different institutions. The concept of ‘predictable funding for predictable needs’ can immediately be seen to offer a new

way forward offering continuity and stability for both funders and recipients of social transfers.

It is of course difficult to decipher the true position of governments with respect to social protection. While particular agencies within government may be enthusiastic, sceptical political calculation concerning whether there is real mileage in prioritizing social protection is the norm, and decisions actually made by governments can equally well exasperate as surprise those advocating more stable and consistent social protection policies in individual states. Amongst countries visited for the research scoping, India clearly stands out as exhibiting real intentions to tackle hunger and deprivation in those sectors of society left behind by the rapid pace of economic change in the country. While the chief vehicle for doing this in rural areas has in recent times been NREGS, different branches of government are preparing policies to provide minimum support to other categories of deprived people in both rural and urban areas. A critical problem in India, as in many other countries, is the lack of coordination of many of these initiatives, thereby risking duplication or gaps in coverage because different branches of government do not quite know what each other are doing.

Africa represents a very diverse picture. Social protection has been a contested political issue in South Africa (Lund, 2008) but is at least fairly high up the agenda with expectations that cannot be ignored by government. With both pensions and the child support grant as regular cash transfers, South Africa is set apart from most other Sub-Saharan African countries. Elsewhere, the political leverage for social protection is changing in fits and starts in different places. Both Lesotho and Swaziland have instituted social pensions within the past five years. Malawi and Zambia have adopted social protection frameworks and secretariats within government, although it must be admitted that this has been as much to do with the intense level of donor engagement in those countries as with real enthusiasm on the part of governments. On the other hand, Malawi surprised by suddenly, and against donor wishes, adopting a national level inputs (fertilizer and seed) subsidy in 2005, which has now run for three seasons. The Lesotho (pensions) and Malawi (inputs subsidy) examples illustrate how political calculation can suddenly open new doors, and when decisions have genuine political clout behind them they are then implemented with a degree of energy and enthusiasm often markedly absent in purely donor-led initiatives.

The strength of southern demand for social protection research is not in the view of the authors of this report a consideration on which there is any doubt. The next dimension to consider is research partners. It is not considered appropriate to list potential southern partners by name in this scoping study. Such a list would inevitably be incomplete given the limits of the study, and it seems probably that research consortia that bid for a research programme are likely to have formed their own networks based on prior experience of working with different partners. Many UK development research institutions have an excellent record of productive partnerships with research organisations in the south, as do other well-known institutions in the north that have worked on social protection like IFPRI.

Specifically in social protection research scope exists for creative relationships with some of the principle national and international NGOs that are actively involved in delivering social protection. BRAC in Bangladesh immediately springs to mind, as do NGOs like Oxfam, Save the Children UK, Concern Universal, CARE and so on. Some of these NGOs already conduct their own research and employ their own research personnel, albeit not always free of agendas weighted towards advocacy rather than balanced academic enquiry. In this context, the authors of this report consider it essential that research that is commissioned under a

social protection research programme is based on academic criteria and involves peer review of proposals, precisely in order to guard against advocacy biases in research topics and methods. Advocacy can make for ill-founded policy conclusions and costly policy mistakes, which is not what this research programme should be about.

In seeking to form productive research partnerships in the south, a role for southern-based CGIAR centres should not be discounted. These institutions are based in low income countries, they are often mainly staffed with nationals of the countries where they sit, and they often have excellent outreach in the region or sub-region in which they coordinate agricultural research. Many of them are also involved in aspects of social protection in rural areas, for example the contingency financing idea for livestock insurance being trialled by ILRI in Nairobi that was mentioned earlier.

DFID rightly places considerable emphasis on building capabilities in southern institutions as a core function of research consortia. Yet often restrictions on what DFID is prepared in practice to fund within a research programme (for example, prohibiting the PhD training of research collaborators), taken together with immense pressure on the leading partners to demonstrate achievement of outputs, means that capacity building does not occur, rather research consortia work with the existing capacity (individuals who already have the requisite research skills and are known to be reliable in organising fieldwork and producing results). There are only two ways out of this. Either capacity-building in southern research institutions should be decoupled from research projects, and made a priority in its own right (this is the approach taken by many continental European development funding agencies), or recognition that capacity building means training and qualifications (amongst other things) must be built into research projects. It is interesting that in science research funding in the UK it would be considered very odd indeed if the funding of a laboratory for ten years did not produce a stream of new researchers doing doctoral and post-doctoral work, while in the social science of development this is seldom, if ever, permitted to happen for the southern institutions involved in the research process.

DFID are also keen for southern partners to lead research consortia; and this could work well for research restricted to a particular regional or sub-regional focus. However, for a social protection research programme to work well (see comments on methodology above) a considerable amount of cross-regional and cross-country comparative work is indicated, and this could be more difficult to achieve from a southern base in an individual country than from an institution (or group of institutions) that already have international coverage as their remit. This is not to imply that southern institutions could not potentially have such an international remit, but those that do (for example, EPRI in South Africa) have nowhere near sufficient capacity in terms of professional and support staff to undertake such a large multi-regional responsibility.

The conclusion is that DFID might be wise to go with a consortium that has an established record of conducting and managing complex worldwide partnerships in research. There will no doubt be no shortage of such consortia formed when a social protection research programme is put out to tender. There is some risk, as always in such exercises, that talent that could have made seriously worthwhile contributions to a social protection programme will get excluded by the competitive formation of different consortia. This risk can be guarded against to some degree by encouraging consortia to involve individuals from multiple institutions in their submissions; moreover, it should be possible after a consortium selection has been made to reincorporate any really valuable ideas and the individuals

associated with them into the final programme that goes ahead (after all this is research, not building a railway line). However, admittedly, these are matters on which the research scoping team has no authority on which to pontificate.

It is taken as automatic that a successful research consortium will be funded sufficiently to build an excellent website, of a kind that will enable exchanges of data and documents as well as work-in-progress and finished products. In particular, the consortium should be required to be an 'open-source' provider of data sets useful for social protection research, following the ESRC model of requiring researchers that collect data to make their data sets publicly available, and properly documented, so that others can potentially do different work with the same data. This is particularly important given the emphasis on tracking households in order to measure impacts that is built into the research pre-design set out earlier.

It was mentioned earlier that scope needs to be built into the research design to be to some degree 'opportunistic' in selecting social transfer programmes on which (and with which) to conduct research. Certainly a proportion of social protection research lends itself to being 'action research' in the sense of being actively involved in an ongoing delivery process, and helping to interpret processes and outcomes as they occur. The example mentioned earlier is the mainly DFID-funded HSNP in Kenya that is due to start operating in November 2008. This is actually an extended pilot programme designed to test a range of modalities about delivering cash transfers to very poor people in remote semi-arid areas, and is therefore virtually a research project in itself. It would be a missed opportunity if a newly formed research consortium were not to seek to form a complementary relationship with a programme such as this, helping to overcome, for example, constraints on data analysis and getting lessons out into the wider world that may be faced within the programme itself.

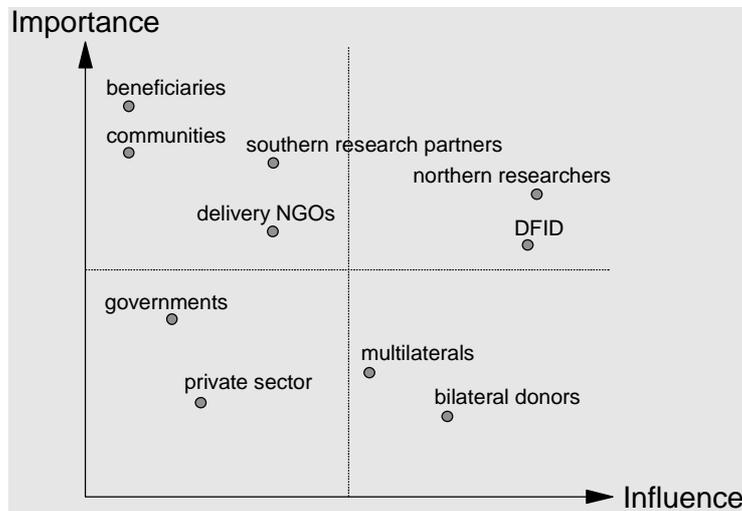
The preceding paragraphs have talked quite a lot about collaboration, communication and outreach, all essential attributes of a cross-regional, multi-country, research programme in social protection. However, a sensible balance must be struck between the amount of time and resources devoted to outreach activities as compared to the research itself. It is unfortunately true that too many bolt-ons to the central business of research merely result in shrinking the resources available for doing the serious, in-depth, and innovative research that is supposed to be the core function of the programme.

It was mentioned earlier that peer review of research proposals would be a desirable feature of a research programme in social protection. Further than this, DFID might wish to consider instituting a small expert panel (preferably based in an academic institution) entirely independent of the successful research consortium to play several related roles of peer review, mentoring, trouble-shooting, assessing, from outside the consortium. It can be helpful for members of a complex consortium to have such expertise to hand not just for the functions already listed, but also as an independent reference point in the event of conflicts over priorities, methods, appropriate case studies and so on.

The terms of reference for this study require a stakeholder analysis for a social protection research programme to be undertaken. A basic stakeholder diagram is presented in Figure 2 below. The principle stakeholders of social protection research are actual and potential beneficiaries (ultra-poor and highly vulnerable people), the communities in which those beneficiaries reside, the organisations that jointly select the beneficiaries (selection participants), the organisations involved in transfer design and delivery, local and central

governments, NGOs, donors, international bodies working on social protection provision in poor countries, and many others too numerous to mention.

Figure 2: A Basic Stakeholder Analysis of Social Protection Research



As always in such exercises, it is no surprise to note that ultimate beneficiaries are high in importance but low in influence in the way research is conducted, while the leading research partners in a consortium are both high in influence and high in importance (they may actually produce worthwhile findings). There is a risk that governments will be low in importance and influence, even though ultimately it is governments that must decide to finance and implement scaled-up social protection. A stakeholder analysis can be useful for highlighting potential areas where extra effort and sensitivity is required to achieve inclusiveness in the research process. It unfortunately does not provide a solution to the inevitable problem that research results are generated in one place, but may have their most productive impact somewhere else. While this can be guarded against to some degree (taking research findings back to the communities in which they were generated), it must also be accepted that the spread of knowledge as a serendipitous process cannot be pre-ordained by over-anxiety about involving everyone in the process all the time.

## Conclusions

This report began by making the distinction between what we already know and what we do not know about social protection. The literature review and responses from interviewees indicate that we already know a lot about the reasons for instituting and improving the coverage of social protection in low income countries (the 'why' of social protection), we know a fair amount, but not enough, about the design and delivery of social protection (the 'how' of social protection), and we know far too little about the impacts and linkages of social protection (the 'with what effects' of social protection).

The report sets out a pre-design agenda for social protection research. This agenda is divided into five clusters of topics, comprising design and delivery, micro impacts, macro impacts, politics and finance, and environmental change aspects and linkages of social protection. The design and delivery component is intended to address continuing knowledge gaps about the 'how' of social protection. The other four components are mostly concerned with direct and

indirect impacts of social protection, and broader linkages that connect social protection to politics, finance, growth and environmental change. Each research component contains a number of sub-topics, and these can be added to, or subtracted from, as desired. It is also easy enough to re-designate sub-topics between components, since some of them are ambiguous as to where they might best be situated. The agenda also points to two important cross-cutting themes: gender and the rural-urban divide that should potentially be integral to the design of many of the individual research projects that obtain funding within the broader social protection research programme.

The report makes some observations, many of them of a commonsense variety, regarding the framework of organisation, partnerships, networks, capacity building, communications and inclusiveness that need to be borne in mind in the management and process of a social protection research programme. The report is not definitive on some of these matters, especially where they stray well outside the remit of a scoping study for an individual research programme. It is pointed out, however, that true capacity building in southern partners must involve training, education, skills development and qualifications, for otherwise all that happens is that existing capacity is given more work to do. The authors of this report would favour a consortium led by a grouping of institutions that already possess a substantial international research outreach, because cross-region and cross-country lesson learning turns out to be a very major desirable feature of social protection research. The report also advocates a degree of post-award flexibility in recombining research talents, since a significant downside of placing consortia in competition with each other is the loss of significant contributory skills within close runners up in the competition. In the end, it is the conduct of excellent research likely to make a serious contribution to innovation in the provision of social protection that must be the most important principle to follow.

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**ANNEX A: Individuals and Institutions Consulted in the Research Scoping**

<b>Person</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Date</b>
Armando Barrientos	Brooks World Poverty Institute, Manchester	UK	6-Jun-08
Allister McGregor	Dept of Social & Policy Sciences, Bath University	UK	16-May-08
Tim Robertson	DFID – Evaluation Dept.	UK	9-May-08
Tim Waites	DFID – Growth & Investment Team	UK	9-May-08
Charlotte Heath	DFID – SP Regional Focal Point for Africa	UK	23-May-08
Mary Thompson	DFID – SP Regional Focal Point for Latin America	UK	9-May-08
Xavier Lecacheur	DFID Financial Sector Team	UK	4-Jun-08
Angela Penrose	Grow Up Free From Poverty Coalition	UK	8-May-08
Stephen Kidd	HelpAge International	UK	29-May-08
Mark Davies	IDS Centre for Social Protection	UK	12-May-08?
Rachel Slater	Overseas Development Institute	UK	??
Andrew Dorward	School of Oriental & African Studies	UK	15-May-08
Kate Gooding	Sightsavers International	UK	14-May-08
Philippe Bertrand	AIDCO E6, Food Security, European Commission	Belgium	13-May-08
Krzysztof Hagemejer	ILO Social Security Department	Switzerland	2-Jun-08
David Porteous	Bankable Frontier Associates	USA	12-Jun-08
Nora Lustig	George Washington University	USA	15-May-08
Isabel Ortiz	UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs	USA	14-May-08
Harold Alderman	Social Protection & Labor Sector, World Bank	USA	13-Jun-08
Milan Vodopivec	Social Protection & Labor Sector, World Bank	USA	13-Jun-08
Fabio Veras Soares	UNDP International Poverty Centre & IPEA	Brazil	19-May-08
Milko Matijasic	UNDP International Poverty Centre & IPEA	Brazil	11-Jun-08
Hennie Bester & Anja Smith	Centre for Financial Regulation and Inclusion	South Africa	2-Jun-08
Charlotte du Toit	Dept. of Economics, University of Pretoria	South Africa	15-May-08
Malcolm Ridout	DFID, Southern Africa	South Africa	15-May-08
Sam Yates	DFID, Southern Africa	South Africa	15-May-08
Kenneth Mac Quene	Economic Policy Research Institute	South Africa	19-May-08
Mike Sampson	Economic Policy Research Institute	South Africa	19-May-08
Rob Rusconi	FinMark Trust	South Africa	13-May-08
Lisa Dancaster	HEARD, Univ. of Kwazulu Natal	South Africa	20-May-08
Tim Quinlan	HEARD, Univ. of Kwazulu Natal	South Africa	20-May-08
Harriet Matsaert	International Livestock Research Institute	South Africa	22-May-08
Jenny Hoffman	Risk Frontier	South Africa	13-May-08
Anna McCord	SALDRU, Univ. of Cape Town	South Africa	18-May-08
Dori Posel	School of Devt. Studies, Univ. of Kwazulu Natal	South Africa	22-May-08
Francie Lund	School of Devt. Studies, Univ. of Kwazulu Natal	South Africa	22-May-08
Leigh Stubblefield	DFID, Nairobi	Kenya	22-May-08
Karen Tibbo	Hunger Safety Nets Programme	Kenya	26-May-08
Sammy Keter	Hunger Safety Nets Programme	Kenya	25-May-08

Person	Institution	Country	Date
Ade Freeman	International Livestock Research Institute	Kenya	22-May-08
Andrew Mude	International Livestock Research Institute	Kenya	22-May-08
Ben Watkins	Kimetrica	Kenya	13-May-08
Helen Bushell	Oxfam – Improving Pastoral Livelihoods Prog.	Kenya	25-May-08
John Omiti, Nancy Nafula, Lydia Ndirangu	Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA), Nairobi	Kenya	25-May-08
Zulfikar Ali	Bangladesh Institute for Development Studies	Bangladesh	19-May-08
Monica Gomes, Altaf Hussain, Abul Kalam	BRAC University for Educational Development	Bangladesh	20-May-08
Penny Davies	DFID Bangladesh	Bangladesh	18-May-08
Rebecca Calder	DFID Bangladesh	Bangladesh	18-May-08
Malcolm Marks	DFID, Chars Livelihoods Programme	Bangladesh	22-May-08
Ric Goodman	DFID, Chars Livelihoods Programme	Bangladesh	22-May-08
Mahabub Hossain	Executive Director, BRAC	Bangladesh	20-May-08
Faustina Pereira	Human Rights and Legal Services, BRAC	Bangladesh	20-May-08
Ciro Fiorillo & Marie-Jo Cortijo	National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme, FAO	Bangladesh	18-May-08
Imran Matin	Research and Evaluation Division, BRAC	Bangladesh	18-May-08
Syed Khabir	WFP Bangladesh	Bangladesh	20-May-08
Qaiser Khan	World Bank – South Asia Region	Bangladesh	1-May-08
Shivani Gupta	Accessibility	India	16-May-08
Rina Bhagat	Advocate	India	16-May-08
Anja Kovacs	Butterflies	India	22-May-08
Gita Sabharwal	DFID, India	India	15-May-08
Rachel Lambert	DFID, India	India	15-May-08
Rajeshwar Devarakonda	HelpAge India	India	21-May-08
Rajeev Raturi	Human Rights Law Network	India	16-May-08
Mark Socquet	ILO Sub-regional office for South Asia	India	22-May-08
Prof K.C. Malhotra	Indian Statistical Bureau	India	May-08
Project Team	Madhya Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Project	India	May-08
Amita Sharma	Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India	India	23-May-08
Arbind Prasad	Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment	India	21-May-08
Ashish Kumar	Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment	India	15-May-08
Satyendra Prakash	Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment	India	21-May-08
VK Malhotra	National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector	India	22-May-08
Poonam Natarajan	National Trust	India	16-May-08
Cristina S Guerrero	Non-Timber Forest Products Exchange Programme	India	May-08
Nandita Ray	Outreach	India	May-08
Tony Cunningham	People and Plants	India	May-08
BN Yugandhar	Planning Commission of India	India	22-May-08
Archana Sinha	Rural Development Unit, Indian Social Institute	India	15-May-08

<b>Person</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Date</b>
Anjlee Agarwal	Samarthyam: National Centre for Accessible Environments	India	16-May-08
Rajesh Kumar	Society for Promotion of Youth and Masses	India	21-May-08
Ajit Kanitkar	The Ford Foundation, India	India	15-May-08
Ashita Mittal	UN Office on Drugs and Crime	India	21-May-08
NC Saxena	UNICEF	India	16-May-08
Puja Dutta	World Bank, Human Devt. Sector, South Asia	India	22-May-08
Robert Palacios	World Bank, Human Devt. Sector, South Asia	India	22-May-08