

IDS PROGRAMME BRIEFING

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Social Protection and Resilience to Climate and Disaster

Social Protection, Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction all aim to reduce vulnerability to shocks. But so far these three communities of practice have worked in isolation. This Briefing explores how these communities could work together to create tools and spaces that strengthen household resilience and make better contributions to sustainable development.

“These three [communities of practice] must talk to each other, perform together, sing together, and be part of a common process”

ANDREW STEER, WORLD BANK SPECIAL ENVOY, CLIMATE CHANGE

Shocks such as climate change impacts, increased frequency of disasters and sudden yet enduring food price spikes have generated concern about the implications for the vulnerability of poor people and the urgent need to strengthen their resilience. Against this background there has been a growing awareness of the need for greater cohesion between the spheres of social protection (SP), climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR). Yet to date, there remain few examples of such integration in practice.

To address this emerging agenda, the World Bank, the UK Department for International Development, the Institute of Development Studies and the UN Economic Commission for Africa convened an international workshop in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) which brought together 120 policymakers, practitioners and researchers from 20 different countries working in the fields of social protection, climate change adaptation or disaster risk reduction. *Making Social Protection Work for Pro-poor Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation* aimed to better understand how



A community member from Sire Woreda shares his views on the Productive Safety Net Programme, Ethiopia

social protection can be used to strengthen poor people's resilience to climate and natural disaster risk in developing countries, to create a forum for cross-regional learning about good practice, and to explore the potential synergies that can be generated between the three communities of practice. The following observations and lessons emerged from the discussions that took place and seek to inform a more integrated approach – a concept known as Adaptive Social Protection (see opposite).

What is Adaptive Social Protection?

Adaptive Social Protection (ASP) is a new, integrated approach to reduce the vulnerability of poor people in developing countries. It works on the understanding of the interlinked nature of the shocks and stresses that poor people face today – and the potential synergies to be gained from bringing together social protection, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

Initial research suggests an ASP approach to vulnerability and poverty reduction can:

- **Transform and promote** livelihoods.
- Target communities with **tailored assistance**.
- Incorporate a **rights-based rationale** for action.
- Introduce a **longer-term perspective** for SP and DRR interventions.
- Enhance **co-working** between the natural and social sciences when designing SP, CCA and DRR interventions.
- Introduce an **SP metric** for evaluating the 'resilience building' component of programming approaches.

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“Relatively little is known about how to fully integrate social protection, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Greater investment in research, evaluations and impact assessments is urgently required.”

Still some challenges to overcome...

“We are always reminded about what we can gain, but what about what we could lose, what about painful trade-offs?”

ADDIS WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT

While enthusiasm for integration was very much in evidence during the workshop, participants also demonstrated a pragmatic awareness of the challenges ahead.

Making progress within SP, CCA & DRR: Too many questions or challenges remain only partially answered and unaddressed *within* each of these communities of practice. Each is going through rapid evolution (mainly for the better) in terms of understanding how to better address and reduce the underlying, structural factors of people’s vulnerability – as opposed to simply the symptoms of these factors of vulnerability. This obviously raises a number of questions and debates.

Potential trade-offs: It should not come as a surprise that a degree of concern or scepticism was expressed by practitioners who were asked to reflect upon the integration of the three communities of practice together. Part of this concern

may also reflect some form of individual or institutional resistance to change. Change can be difficult for people (civil servants, NGOs, practitioners) to accept. Even for those who are already convinced of the potential benefits of integration, these changes may challenge and disturb existing ways of working.

Coordination and capacity: There remain significant differences in the technical jargons and languages deployed between SP, CCA and DRR. Disparities in international or even national coordinating bodies, and incoherence or competition in funding mechanisms are also evident. This lack of coordination, which is observed at the policy level, is exacerbated by the lack of capacity that affects most developing countries’ governmental or non-governmental institutions.

Overload: Integration without enhancing the human, financial, institutional, and organisational capacities and resources of the implementing agencies is likely to overburden programmes and eventually affect their abilities to deliver benefits to their initial target groups.

Competition: The fact that in some cases integration will have to be implemented without necessarily attracting additional funds or resources is certainly contributing to the concern expressed openly by certain practitioners. Some would argue that the ability of programmes to deliver is closely related to funding levels and that there is a risk that re-allocation of funds to cover costs of additional interventions may jeopardise the financial sustainability of some existing programmes.

Documenting and evaluating integration: While workshop participants recognised that there is a need to understand the real concerns and possible limitations of integrating SP, CCA, and DRR, there is also a need to better document the impact of synergy between the three approaches. To date, relatively little is known about how to fully integrate these communities of practice in real-life, vulnerability-reducing programmes and projects on the ground. Greater investment in research, evaluations and impact assessments is urgently required.



Participants of the Addis Ababa workshop visiting a Social Protection Programme in Sire Woreda, Ethiopia

“Integrating the three communities of practice more comprehensively may not be easy, but it clearly makes sense.”

Key lessons and implications

Integration is a big part of the way forward:

Integrating the three communities of practice more comprehensively may not be easy, but it clearly makes sense. The representatives from government, civil society and research that were present at the workshop all committed in different ways to deepening the integration between SP, CCA and DRR with the hope that this can strengthen people's resilience to shocks. At the same time, they recognised that integration for the sake of integration is to be avoided in situations where it is not necessary.

Recognising where integration is already occurring and learning from it:

There is a growing body of operational pilots and national-level programmes moving towards the operational integration of SP, CCA and DRR. While not yet reflected widely in published literature, they confirm the existence of a rich empirical knowledge among experts, practitioners, policymakers and analysts on the ways to integrate the three disciplines.

Recognising the 'political economy' of the process:

The process of integration requires a good understanding and knowledge of what it means for each community. This last point led the participants of the workshop to point out the 'political economy' dimension of the process – i.e. the recognition that (re)allocations of resources are usually not free of costs and may end up creating tension or conflicts between various



Participants talk to community members on field trip, Ethiopia

groups of stakeholders. There is therefore a clear need to make sure that all those stakeholders are included in the process, including donors and government agencies.

Do not reinvent the wheel: Participants unanimously recognised that integration is not about finding a wholly new system, but about sharing knowledge and bringing

flexibility into the design of existing programmes. What is needed, therefore, is to draw on existing institutional arrangements (instead of establishing new ones) and use those institutional mechanisms that have been developed 'over the years' to build flexibility into programmes.

Bringing a human-centred approach: In order to be effective, greater integration would have to engage more fully with the perspectives, priorities and capacities of poor people. There was a clear sense during the workshop that not enough attention had been paid so far to community-based approaches to facilitate the integration between SP, CCA and DRR. Instead, the frameworks used to conceptualise, plan, implement or evaluate interventions have usually been too 'programme-centred.' The use of local community risk assessments and participatory planning were both seen as useful tools to help address these concerns.

When integration works: Rwanda's Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP)

The Rwanda Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP) is a social protection programme managed and implemented by the Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC). The goal of VUP is to help reduce extreme poverty. VUP-funded public works projects are dominated by anti-erosive ditches and radical terracing of hillsides, which explicitly aim at environmental protection. Such public works have clear disaster risk reduction/food security and climate change adaptation impacts as they reduce the exposure to natural disasters (e.g. droughts and floods), improve soil productivity, and also expand the amount of cultivable land. As such, social protection public works can reduce vulnerability, build resilience and increase incomes and food security in a virtuous cycle that links social protection with disaster risk reduction/food security and climate change adaptation. VUP beneficiaries are expected to 'graduate' from the programme over time on a sustainable basis.

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“ Potential funders should consider developing capacity for bottom-up approaches to integration. ”

What's next?

Further collaboration:

- Collaboration at country level could feasibly revolve around identifying cases of integration that are already taking place, and funding major programmes to take this agenda forward practically.
- A strategy to achieve goals, verification methods and timing for implementation could also be devised.
- A working group on how to synthesise and develop monitoring and evaluation approaches could be established.
- Country-level guidelines addressed to the three communities of practice could be formulated, along with in-country guidelines and capacity building expertise for integration in a bottom-up (as opposed to top-down) agenda.
- Potential funders should consider developing capacity for bottom-up approaches to integration.

Collective research and joined-up thinking:

- Of particular importance is the development of indicators around resilience both common to and across SP, CCA and DRR. There is also an increasing interest for impact evaluation, with a specific role for behavioural and experimental economics.
- Research on 'Low Carbon Social Protection', analysis of institutional decision-making related to Adaptive Social Protection, and where and on what terms the new climate financing funding can be used in relation to social protection, should be most systematically explored.
- Another activity might be to analyse and document more thoroughly the story of the poor collaboration between social protection, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in an attempt to move us away from the current silo-specific approach that has characterised the discussion so far.

Acknowledgements

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The full report of the Addis Ababa workshop is available from the ASP programme website.

www.adaptivesocialprotection.org

This Programme Briefing was written by **Chris Béné**, coordinator of the Adaptive Social Protection (ASP) programme and edited by **Clare Gorman**.

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