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EUROPEAN REPORT
ON **DEVELOPMENT**

SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR DEVELOPMENT: A REVIEW OF DEFINITIONS

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**MOBILISING EUROPEAN RESEARCH
FOR DEVELOPMENT POLICIES**

ABSTRACT

There is a growing recognition that poverty and deprivation in developing countries cannot be defeated solely by the promotion of economic growth. Specific interventions, targeting the most vulnerable sectors of the population, are increasingly considered as necessary complements to more traditional pro-growth policies, especially in the face of unstable global socio-economic scenarios. Social protection is often considered a double-dividend policy for development: it is an effective input for economic growth and it directly reduces poverty by targeting vulnerable households. However, the definition of social protection can be vague and the array of varying definitions can lead to confusion. Social protection has been framed as a policy response to risk, as a human right, and as an agenda for livelihood building. Nonetheless, social protection is generally described as the set of public and private mechanisms that protect and prevent individuals and households from suffering the worst consequences of shocks and stresses. Its novelty lies in its additional attempt to promote resilient livelihoods. However, almost any public intervention could be considered more or less directly part of the social protection system. In this perspective, education policy, pension systems, health care, and many other development policies will fall under a very vague definition of social protection. Such a definition would capture the complex system of linkages between social protection and all other social welfare components, but would hamper our understanding of the specificity of social protection in fighting poverty and promoting economic growth. In what follows we review and discuss the most influential definitions of social protection in the framework of development and aid policies and we explain how the operational definition of social protection has been conceived in the European Report on Development.

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Introduction

In the last decade, a considerable consensus has emerged regarding the potential role of social protection (hereafter SP) in delivering inclusive growth. European institutions have seen SP as an effective substitute for parts of their welfare systems, which started to be considered to be too costly and inefficient in the late 1980s (Grahl and Teague, 1997). The advantages of SP mechanisms in delivering social security without dampening economic growth have also been perceived as being crucially important for development agencies and a number of developing countries.¹ If SP could produce economic growth while targeting the poorest sectors of the population, it could also be recommended on two counts as a tool to meet development objectives such as the Millennium Development Goals. This conviction has been re-inforced by years of increasing instability. Global market integration has led to dramatic changes in trade and prices; climate change has brought further risks, and the recent financial crisis further challenges.

Three main conceptual bases ground the definition of SP in the development context. Following the tradition of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), some authors define SP as a human right. The rights-based approach considers citizens as “*rights-holders*” and states as “*duty-bearers*”. In this context, SP can be seen as a development of social rights such as equality, inclusion and non-discrimination (ILO, 1953; ILO, 2000; Piron, 2004). A second, partly independent, origin of the concept of SP is the World Bank’s definition of Social Risk Management (hereafter SRM). From the World Bank point of view, SP is the best answer to increasingly unstable scenarios when it comes to poverty alleviation. SP allows the vulnerable to invest and accumulate assets, and, consequently, to escape poverty (World Bank, 2003).² The final (again only partly distinct) basis for a definition of SP is the approach that sees SP as an efficient ingredient in pro-poor economic growth. This last view is shared by a number of authors (Ferrera et al. 2001; Weber, 2006; Barrientos and Hulme 2008; OECD, 2009; UNICEF, 2007; USAID, 2008) and by many recipient governments; the Zambian Government, for example, explicitly states that “*No meaningful and sustained economic growth can be achieved in the absence of social protection*”. Republic of Zambia, 2006, p. 210.³

These three, partly overlapping, approaches lead to a range of SP operational definitions that present some heterogeneity, but many substantial similarities. The states’ duty to provide SP implies the choice of a set of policies capable of effectively guaranteeing SP for all. Similarly, the SRM approach necessitates a number of practices and policies to handle risk, just as pro-poor growth is efficiently met when a set of policies and private actions combat the failures that reduce the well-being of the poor and dampen economic growth. The implementation of these theoretical SP definitions calls for the clarification of what the specific objectives of SP are, which actions and programmes best deliver SP, and who should play a role in designing and implementing them.

Tackling vulnerability and chronic need

One of the most frequently recurring concepts in all definitions of SP is “*vulnerability*”. Vulnerability is the main focus of the World Bank definition, but is also a central issue in all SP definitions that we reviewed.⁴ Vulnerability can be defined at several levels. At the

1 See among other documents and contributions: Holzmann and Jorgensen (2001), IMF (2001), The World Bank (2003), The Caribbean Development Bank (2005), DFID (2005), Sabates-Wheeler and Haddad (2005); Weber (2006); Republic of Niger (2007); Kabeer (2008); Barrett et al (2008); The African Union (2008); OECD (2009). A number of definitions endorsed by recipients Governments are reported in Appendix, these definitions come from IMF’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers database.

2 A number of recipients Countries share the World Bank view, an explicit focus on social risk management is shared by the republic of Cape Verde (2005),

3 See, also, Republic of Ghana (2005) and United Republic of Tanzania (2008).

4 For the Caribbean Development Bank (2005) vulnerability and risks are the sole target of SP.

macro level, vulnerability refers to countries or regions that are likely to experience frequent external shocks, and that have poor resilience and limited capacity to react to shocks. Climate change, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the financial crisis and price fluctuations have recently drawn the international community's attention to vulnerable and fragile countries such as small developing island states and sub-Saharan African countries (Guillaumont (2008), ERD (2009)). At the micro level, vulnerability refers to small communities, households and individuals facing both "*idiosyncratic*" and "*covariate*" shocks.⁵ As defined by Alwang *et al.*,

"a household is said to be vulnerable [when it is at risk] of future loss of welfare below socially accepted norms caused by risky events. The degree of vulnerability depends on the characteristics of the risk and the households ability to respond to risk" (2002, p. 6).

Macro-level vulnerability is deeply linked with micro-level vulnerability. However, the two conditions do not necessarily coincide. Vulnerability is a widespread phenomenon in fragile developing countries, but it is also an issue for rich countries in which a well-developed SP system generally works as an automatic insurance policy (EFILWC, 2008).

In the last decade, the role of vulnerability in dampening development has gained the attention of policy-makers and academics. Vulnerability slows down economic growth at macro level (because of both lower average economic performance and higher instability and uncertainty), while, at micro level, vulnerability is detrimental on two counts: vulnerable households experience larger welfare losses when shocks occur and vulnerability modifies household strategies, preventing households from taking risky, but profitable, decisions (Holzmann and Jorgensen 2001, Barret *et al.*, 2008; Guillaumont, 2008).

SP has been proposed as an efficient policy tool to tackle vulnerability, targeting the phenomenon at micro level but also likely to have an impact at macro level. Consequently, the increasing centrality of SP in the international policy agenda has kept pace with the growing attention to vulnerability.

Along with vulnerability, "*chronic need*" is also part and parcel of many SP definitions. In particular, chronic need is included in SP definitions that do not confine SP to short-term support to cope with temporary shocks, but expand it to:

"a broader vision that sees social protection as having both short term and long term roles in poverty reduction: helping people to conserve and accumulate assets and to transform their socio-economic relationships so that they are not constrained from seizing opportunities by bonding or clientelism" (Barrientos *et al.*, 2005).⁶

However, this dimension is virtually neglected by the SRM definition, and a number of authors consider the exclusion of this dimension to be the main weakness of the SRM approach (Haddad, 2007; Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux, 2007). The criticism generally underlines how the exclusion of chronic poverty and need from the domain of SP tends to understate the role of structural mechanisms in generating vulnerability and poverty in the first place. These are mechanisms that are at least as important as temporary shocks, and that further impact significantly on the effectiveness of temporary interventions.

However, chronic need can also be linked to risk and vulnerability. Chronic poverty may be an effect of vulnerability, a situation in which a negative shock (being widowed, undernourished, elderly, and so on) generates a permanent need for external support. Reversing causality, chronic need may be considered to be a condition of high vulnerabil-

5 Idiosyncratic shocks are harmful events that hit a single individual, household or small community; covariate shocks involve a large number of individuals simultaneously.

6 Note that chronic need and poverty are generally included in all definitions that, more or less directly, refer to the rights-based approach.

ity in which the probability of shocks and the inability to cope with them are so high as to require permanent support (Holzmann and Jorgensen, 2001; Kabeer, 2008). Moreover, if vulnerability is characterised by the combination of a high probability of experiencing shocks, elevated exposure to the negative consequences of shocks and low resilience, then there are a wide range of socio-economic groups who are, by definition, vulnerable (orphans, widows, elderly and disabled persons). This wider interpretation of the SP domain, which couples attention to vulnerability with a precise focus on chronic need, has been proposed by a number of authors and international agencies (Barrientos et al., 2005; Haddad, 2007; OECD, 2009). Probably the most progressive SP definition is provided by Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux, and takes the name of “*transformative social protection*”. Here, the word “*transformative*” means that, when thinking of SP, one should:

“no longer be focused on how to design a policy so that various groups face less risk in a given context but on how to transform this context to minimize risk for a range of vulnerable groups.” Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux (2007) p. 24⁷.

Social protection components

Objectives require a set of actions that can concretely deliver protection. A very simple and practical classification of social protection components is given by Ferreira and Robalino (2010):

“Together, social assistance and social insurance make up a country’s social protection system”.

In their view, the two components are partly overlapping transfer schemes that aim to implement two different policies: risk management and the delivery of re-distribution. Other authors have proposed wider and more complex classifications. Guhan has proposed a classification of SP policies in which three broad components of action are nested: protection, prevention, and promotion. The protection component of SP is composed of policies that protect a minimum level of welfare for people who are in difficulty. Prevention is granted by policies that prevent vulnerable individuals from going below acceptable welfare standards. Finally, policies aimed at reducing individuals’ vulnerability in the future form the promotion component of SP (Ellis et al., 2009). Guhan underlines how these three categories represent three concentric circles, from wider to narrower domains of SP specificity:

“The outer circle of promotional measures would include the whole array of macro-economic, sectorial and institutional measures of major importance for poverty reduction, operating at the macro and meso levels. [...] Middle circles would consist of what have come to be known as direct measures for poverty alleviation, such as asset redistribution, employment creation, and food security. The inner circle would contain specific measures for the relief from or protection against deprivation to the extent that the latter is not, or cannot be, averted through promotion and preventive approaches.” Guhan (1994) p. 35.⁸

In Guhan’s perspective, a definition of SP is, therefore, a choice of how wide (or specific) the circle of policies should be.

Other authors have also identified different channels through which SP works. However, these subsets of policies are generally seen as overlapping rather than concentric. The overlapping classification is less intuitive, but can more easily capture the

7 Note that other definitions implicitly include transformative components. Is the case of the African Union that includes among the objectives of SP to tackle “discrimination” (African Union, 2008).

8 Note that Ellis et al. (2009) cite Guhan but their focus is in distinguishing different components of SP, while Guhan’s definition is also based on a degree of SP content in each kind of policy.

linkages between very specific SP programmes, such as conditional cash transfers, and other policies seemingly unrelated to SP, but which play a crucial role in the SP implementation, such as credit market policies. The World Bank has proposed a classification in which prevention, mitigation and coping form the SRM conceptual framework. Prevention includes all the policies aimed at reducing the probability that risks occur. Mitigation includes programmes that reduce the severity of the consequences of possible future shocks. Coping refers to the policies that deal with the consequences of shocks *ex post*. In the World Bank definition, the three sets of instruments are partly overlapping and partly distinct.⁹ Moreover, some of the policies included in the SRM approach seem to lie outside the traditional domain of SP. This is the case, for example, with a “*good macro economic policy and well functioning financial market*” (Holzmann and Kozel, 2007, p. 11).

Other authors further expand this classification. For example, Voipio stresses how some Nordic donor countries favour a comprehensive view in which SP includes policies aimed at ensuring social security (food, health, education, etc.), policies in support of the most vulnerable, safety-nets, social insurance mechanisms, and macro policies not directly designed to manage risk, but having a positive effect on it (Voipio, 2007).

A wider definition of SP components is also proposed by Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux, who enlarge the traditional space of SP actions with their suggestion of a transformative SP. Transformative SP includes three components, which partly overlap with both the Guhan and the World Bank components: provision, preventive measures, and promotive measures. The provision measures are/include targeted safety-nets, preventive measures similar to the SRM prevention measures for vulnerable households, and promotive measures, all interventions which aim at improving the incomes and capabilities of individuals. This latter element is close to the promotion component in Guhan’s classification, but is more precisely defined as measures “that *have income stabilization at least as one objective*”, or that “*have ‘livelihood promotion’ as well as ‘livelihood protection’ ambitions*” (Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux, 2007 p. 25). The innovative element of this classification lies in the introduction of a fourth new component: transformative measures. The transformative component includes actions that modify the power relationship between stakeholders in favour of vulnerable groups. Examples of transformative actions include the support of trade unions or the facilitation of citizen participation in the democratic process. The reader might understand the transformative component to be either an expansive category that spans the domains of the other three and broadens the original SP definition to include other types of intervention, or as a new autonomous set of actions. We adopt the first interpretation as all other SP components clearly modify the power relationships in favour of most vulnerable groups, and can, therefore, be considered to be ingredients for transformation.¹⁰ A summary of the three most influential classifications is presented in Figure 1.¹¹

9 A similar classification is adopted by the Republic of Chad (2003) which divides SP actions into “three types of intervention: prevention, foresight, and remedies” p. 70.

10 Note that a transformative role for SP is also stated in some recipients’ definition, the Republic of Chad for example considers SP as a means to “contain the excessive inequality and disparities between different social strata” Republic of Chad, 2003, p. 70.

11 Note that figure 1 defines the space of SP as the union of three types of policies and actions. However, it remain unclear whether any actions delivering promotion or protection should be considered part of SP. Weber (2006), for example, explicitly defines SP residually claiming that SP includes all policies that target the vulnerable, involves cash and in-kind transfers and “are not activities that are usually associated with other sectors such as rural development, basic infrastructure, health, and education.” p. 9. At the opposite extreme, the OECD definition explicitly includes policies such as education and health care as part of SP (FAO, 2009).

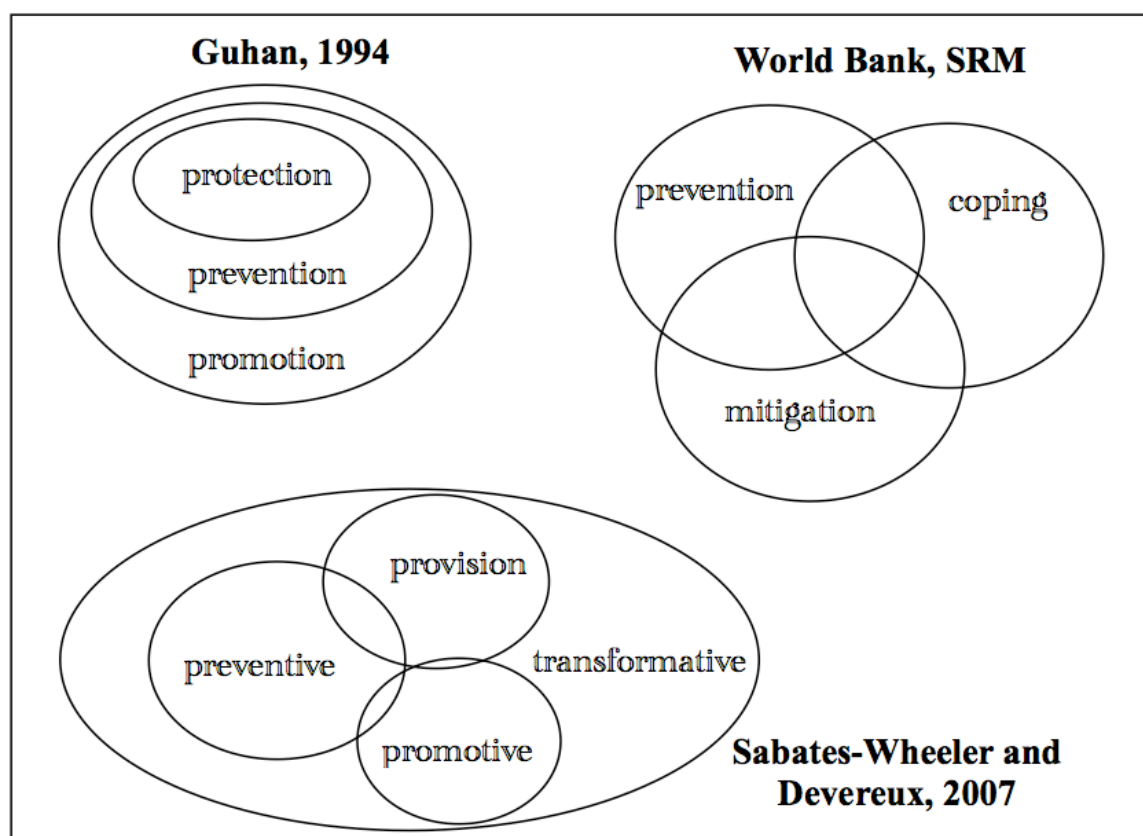


Figure 1 SP components classifications

At first glance, the transformative approach could be placed near the end of a continuum of SP approaches, which starts with economic components, such as cash transfers, and ends with political and social transformation. Nonetheless, almost every SP instrument along this continuum impacts on and is impacted by a country’s political context. Political institutions in a society - the formal and informal “*rules of the game*” (North 1990) - can both encourage and impede action for SP, while political élites influence the viability of SP both as a policy option and the shape that it might take.¹² In fact, it can be argued that SP is almost always a political action: from the decision to build or extend SP systems in the first place to the process of identifying the beneficiary groups. Thus, while much of the work on SP fails to recognise political concerns, others go so far as to define SP in terms of a political contract. Hickey (2007) proposes that the existence of a political contract between states and citizens is the common theme amidst varying forms of SP in sub-Saharan Africa. As more citizens were brought into the social contract with the end of apartheid in South Africa, or the newly achieved independence in Namibia, for example, social pension programmes were radically expanded, increasing SP while also attempting to reverse previous discrimination (Hickey 2007). On the other hand, the lack of a binding political contract between states and citizens elsewhere leaves SP policies open to distortion, for example, by the politics of patrimonialism.

Like the transformative approach, this focus on the political contract highlights the political and societal factors embedded in other SP components while aiming at a broader, normative, definition of SP which advocates that:

“the overarching aim for donor agencies should be to strengthen and extend political contracts for social protection where they exist, and to work towards their establishment where they do not.” (Hickey 2007, p.10).

12 Appendix A includes a number of SP definitions endorsed by recipient Governments, the heterogeneity of the definition and of the space dedicated to SP in their statements clearly show the relative centrality of SP in the Governments’ agenda.

Social protection actors

For broad definitions of SP, which emphasise social and political transformation beyond the mitigation of risks and coping strategies, governments and political agencies can be seen as central actors in any SP activities, particularly in large-scale, nationally-driven initiatives such as social insurance schemes. Political élites can set the agenda for policy debates, which determine who deserves protection and thereby contribute to the historical legacy of policies in a country, which, in turn, shapes the kinds of SP which a society considers to be acceptable (Hickey 2007). Meanwhile, administrative and bureaucratic agencies lobby for certain initiatives over others and can determine whether the implementation of a SP initiative will be successful and whether the targeted beneficiaries are reached.

In spite of the centrality of governments as duty-bearers in such interpretations of SP, many definitions underline that SP actions are not the exclusive prerogative of governments. So while Norton et al. (2001) and Cook and Kabeer (2009) also focus on a public policy approach to SP, they maintain that non-government actors can contribute to these policies. Indeed, the emphasis which many definitions of SP place on empowering vulnerable groups in society highlights the role of citizens as key actors in their own right. Considering the reciprocity embedded in any social contract, Hickey argues that:

“In framing the recipient as an actor rather than a passive recipient, the empowering potential of social protection remains intact and transcends the ‘hand-out’ culture with which it is currently associated in many countries in Africa” (Hickey 2007, p.9).

Organisations that take a human rights-based approach to programming also tend to encourage the participation of the recipient population in determining the appropriate type of SP intervention needed and the methods of implementation (Jaspars and Harvey, 2007).

The perspective that a number of actors can be seen to play a role in delivering SP is underlined by Holzmann and Jorgensen, who maintain that the SRM approach:

“extends Social Protection as traditionally defined since it goes beyond public provision of risk management instruments and draws attention to informal and market-based arrangements, and their effectiveness and impact on development and growth” (Holzmann and Jorgensen, 2001, p. 531).

Different authors have enlarged the set of actors to a greater or lesser extent. Thus, markets play a substantial role in western countries, although this is often not the case in developing countries. Indeed, the development literature has emphasised how the lack of both market institutions and public provisions has generally led individuals and households to develop semi-formal and informal insurance mechanisms against risks (Ellis, 1998). Moreover, in many contexts, informal social protection delivered by households and communities is a relevant part of the cultural identity (United Republic of Tanzania, 2008) and is explicitly considered to be an ingredient for social security and development (The Republic of Uganda, 2004). As a result, it is largely agreed that SP programmes should be introduced in developing countries while carefully evaluating the possible tensions and complementarities with existing informal, semi-formal, and formal mechanisms. The roles and interactions of public, private, and informal actors all have to be re-considered, by looking at the specificities of each developing context.

In addition, within each context, the involvement of different actors takes place at both central and household/community level, meaning that actors need to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of each level. The main advantage of the household- or community-level informal mechanisms is informational. Because small communities possess much of the private information necessary to manage risk, they have an advantage when setting effective insurance mechanisms. Foster (2007) underlines how “*public sector safety nets in developing countries often fail to reach extremely poor people*”, while

informal SP is generally more effective and rapid in reaching individuals in extreme need. This point of view is agreed upon by a number of authors who have underlined the limits of the public intervention in targeting the most vulnerable sector of the population (Hadad and Zeller, 1996; Lundberg and Over, 2000).

On the other hand, lower-level arrangements are likely to suffer from correlated shocks (at community level, the difference between idiosyncratic and covariate shocks tends to disappear) and to be trapped in inefficient mechanisms (Holzmann and Jorgensen, 2001). Wider SP definitions stress the relevance of the appropriate integration of these levels and actors. The role of communities and households has been highlighted here and, in many cases, the household is seen both as an active actor and a passive recipient of SP. This view is also partly criticised. Edstrom, for example, cautions against the idea that the household should be the unit of analysis when dealing with SP. If it is true that community targeting can be more effective, reduce stigma, and propitiate sustainability, it is also true that it can introduce bias, as *“Communities have sometimes been found to reinforce patterns of discrimination, as the lifestyle and livelihood of the most vulnerable are often seen as a threat to social codes and norms”* (Edstrom, 2007 p. 103).

Thus, a list of active SP participants includes: individuals and households, extended families, local communities, NGOs, market institutions, governments, government agencies, and international organisations.

Towards a common definition for European development policies

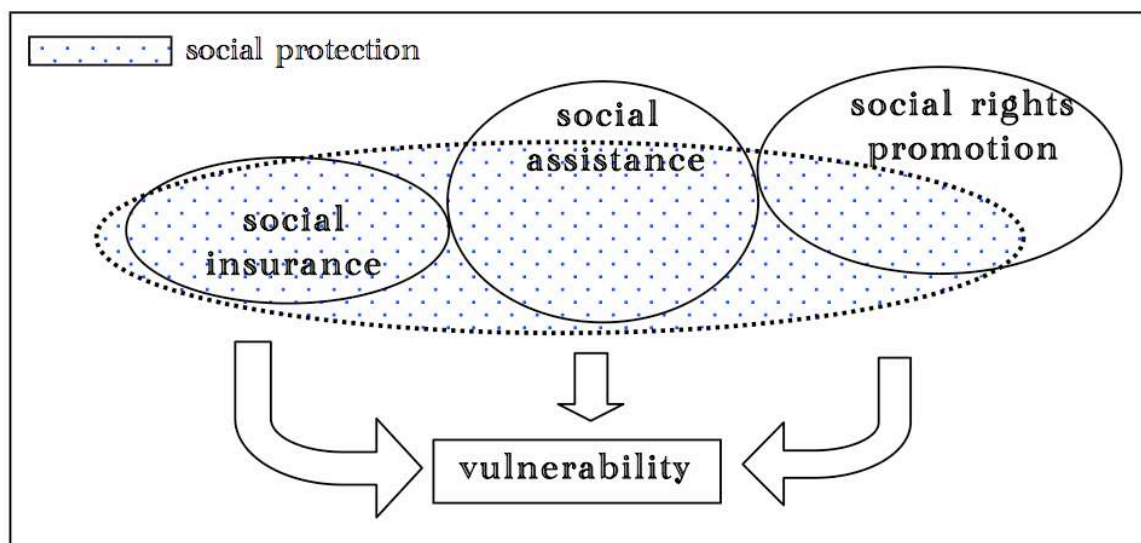
As discussed above, there is a wide array of possible SP definitions. Different authors and organisations have given their own definitions based upon their aims and goals. However, following the last financial and economic crisis, a number of organisations and authors working on development issues seem to have converged towards a common definition of SP.

In developing a working definition for the European Report on Development (ERD, 2010), a number of authors have found a synthesis of different approaches. What was needed was an operational definition that could concretely align European development policies with those that are aspirational for sub-Saharan African countries. The ERD (2010) definition was developed by taking the narrowest definition (SRM) as a starting-point while also maintaining a clear role for short-run insurance response mechanisms. The definition was then widened in two directions: into the domain of poverty reduction, and into the domain of social inclusion. SP is an effective means of tackling poverty; however, its definition should not be widened to include all poverty reduction policies, since the multitude of existing mechanisms used to tackle persistent poverty would expand the meaning of SP far beyond an operational definition. Similarly, social and political inclusion programmes fall within the domain of SP to some extent, but this term should not be widened to include every possible social inclusion programme, a decision that would render the definition far from operational and would hardly inspire concerted action.

Thus, the operational definition adopted by the ERD (2010) focuses explicitly on vulnerability, defined as the *“threat of persistent poverty”*, and includes three components: social insurance, social assistance, and social rights promotion. The components roughly overlap with other classifications (for example, they recall the transformative component that links to social rights promotion), but the desire to keep the definition operational resulted in a number of specific conclusions. First, the three components are considered autonomous. Second, social insurance forms a crucial component of SP. Third, some programmes that are ordinarily classified in the social assistance domain are excluded. Fourth, the transformative component is taken into account, although it is only included in part. Finally, note that the definition (in Box 1) refers to *“public actions”* rather than to programmes and policies, this suggests that the role of the governments is not only to implement SP programmes, but may also enable or create and leave space

for alternative actors. A figure of the definition adopted is represented in Figure 2. Below it, the working definition adopted by the ERD (2010) authors is presented in Box 1.

Figure 2 ERD 2010 working definition



Box 1 ERD 2010 definition

Working definition of Social Protection:

Social protection is the specific set of public actions to address the vulnerability of people's life via social insurance, offering protection against risk and adversity throughout life; via social assistance, offering payments to support and enable the poor; and via social inclusion efforts that enhance the capability of the marginalised to access social insurance and assistance.

Conclusion

SP has gained centrality in the development agenda in the last decade. A number of factors explain this heightened interest: the growing awareness that growth alone can hardly deliver ambitious development goals, the failure of the safety-net programmes introduced in the 1990s in some developing countries, and the extensive agreement on the potential role for SP in generating, rather than slowing down, economic growth. The growing focus on SP has been accompanied by a lively debate on how SP can be defined, what sort of policies it should include, and what actors should be involved in its implementation.

The failure of many development agencies to introduce risk-based programmes successfully has shown that vulnerability in the developing context is a much more complex problem than in wealthier countries. Support after shocks have occurred is not sufficient to tackle vulnerability - a well-functioning SP system should also re-inforce resilience and attempt to improve conditions in order to reduce the probability of shocks. The three components proposed by the World Bank in the SRM framework were an attempt to find a nexus between the overly narrow safety-net approach and SP's more traditional focus on basic needs. Recently, a number of authors have stressed the social component of vulnerability and the need to incorporate support consistently for the chronically poor individuals in the SP definition. These considerations have found a synthesis in wider definitions endorsed by a number of international institutions and academics. Differences in defining SP stem both from the priorities of SP, and from the fundamentals upon which the concept is based. Institutions that believe in a rights-based definition tend to widen the domain of SP, while institutions that endorse a risk and market-failure view tend to propose a narrower definition.

A universally-agreed ethical base for SP does not seem to be a pre-requisite for achieving consensus on an operational definition in the context of development. What is needed, instead, is agreement on how different SP definitions can be co-ordinated and implemented by development agencies. Moreover, given that SP definitions are generally conceptualised by western actors and institutions, and then exported to developing countries, any operational definition will be severely challenged by a number of crucial issues, such as respect for the recipient countries' sovereignty, varying institutional capacities and political constraints, the need to implement SP in large informal labour sectors, and its applicability in very heterogeneous socio-economic contexts.

The operational definition adopted by the ERD 2010 attempts to find a balance between narrow definitions that focus on risk, and on wider definitions that policy-makers could aspire to embody.

Appendix A - SP definitions

We list most influential definitions of SP with a special focus on developing countries.

International organizations:

The African Union (2008)

Social protection encompasses a range of public actions carried out by the state and others that address risk, vulnerability, discrimination and chronic poverty. The right to social security in childhood, old age and at times of disability is expressed in a range of international Human Rights Declarations and treaties. Social security transfers in the form of, for example, pensions, child benefit and disability allowances are considered to be core elements of a comprehensive social protection system.

African Union (2008)

The Asian Development Bank (2006)

The set of policies and programmes that enable vulnerable groups to prevent, reduce and/or cope with risks that:

- Are targeted at the vulnerable groups;
- Involve cash or in-kind transfer; and
- Are not activities that are usually associated with other sectors such as rural development, basic infrastructure, health, and education.

Weber (2006), p. 13

The Caribbean Development Bank (2005)

All interventions from public, private, voluntary organisation and social networks, to support communities, households, and individuals, in their efforts to prevent, manage, and overcome a defined set of risks and vulnerabilities.

Caribbean Development Bank (2005), p. 2

The Department For International Development (2005)

The sub-set of public actions carried out by the state or privately that address risk, vulnerability and chronic poverty. DFID divides SP policies in 3 subsets:

- Social insurance comprises individuals pooling resources by paying contributions to the state or a private provider so that, if they suffer shock or permanent change in their circumstances, they are able to receive financial support [...].
- Social assistance involves non-contributory transfers to those deemed eligible by society on the basis of vulnerability or poverty.
- Setting and enforcing minimum standards to protect citizens in the workplace, although this is difficult to achieve within the informal economy.

DFID (2005), p. 6

Food and Agriculture Organisation (2009)

In addition to safety-nets, social protection also includes labour-market policies and insurance options (for contributory pensions and health insurance), as well as some components of sectoral policies whose main focus is on areas such as education, health, nutrition or agriculture.

FAO (2009)

International Labour Organisation (1952)

Convention n. 102/1952 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) The Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention establishes minimum standards for all nine branches of social security. These branches are: i) medical care; ii) sickness benefit; iii)

unemployment benefit; iv) old-age benefit; v) employment injury benefit; vi) family benefit; vii) maternity benefit; viii) invalidity benefit; and ix) survivors benefit. Convention No. 102 does not prescribe how to reach these objectives but suggests three ways: i) universal schemes; ii) social insurance schemes; and iii) social assistance schemes.

www.ilo.org

International Monetary Found (2001)

Government outlays on social protection include expenditures on services and transfers provided to individual persons and households, and expenditures on services provided on a collective basis. Expenditures on individual services and transfers are allocated to groups through expenditures on collective services are assigned to groups. Collective social protection services are concerned with matters such as the formulation and administration of government policy, the formulation and enforcement of legislation and standards for providing social protection, and applied research and experimental development into social protection affairs and services.

IMF (2001), Annex to Chapter 6, p. 106

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2009)

Policies and actions which enhance the capacity of poor and vulnerable people to escape from poverty and enable them to manage risks and shocks better. Social protection measures include social insurance, social transfers and minimum labour standards.

OECD (2009), p. 12

United Nations (2000)

There are substantial differences among societies in terms of how they approach and define social protection. Differing traditions, cultures and organisational and political structures affect definitions of social protection, as well as the choice about how members of society should receive that protection. In the context of this report, social protection is broadly understood as a set of public and private policies and programmes undertaken by societies in response to various contingencies to offset the absence or substantial reduction of income from work; to provide assistance for families with children as well as to provide people with health care and housing. This definition is not exhaustive; it basically serves as a starting point of the analysis in this report as well as a means to facilitate this analysis.

UN ECOSOC (2000), p. 4

United Nations Children's Fund (2007)

Social protection can be defined as a set of transfers and services that help individuals and households confront risk and adversity (including emergencies) and ensure a minimum standard of dignity and well-being throughout the lifecycle. The social protection approach aims to reduce the vulnerability of poor and marginalised groups through a combination of transfers and services and is rapidly gaining momentum among governments, donors, UN agencies and NGO partners. Social protection has been proven to reduce poverty among the most vulnerable groups, to smooth shocks, to promote asset accumulation and to have beneficial livelihood outcomes.

Jaspars and Harvey (2007), p. 9

United States Agency for International Development (2008)

Public interventions that seek to enable poor and vulnerable households to increase their ability to manage risk, thereby allowing them to contribute to, participate in, and benefit from, economic growth.

Cited in Cook and Kabeer (2009), p. 7

The World Bank (2000)

The proposed definition sees “*SP as public interventions to (i) assist individuals, households, and communities to better manage risk, and (ii) provide support to the critically poor*”. This definition and the underlying framework of Social Risk Management:

- Present SP as a safety-net as well as a spring-board for the poor. While a safety-net for all should exist, the programmes should also provide the poor with the capacity to bounce out of poverty or at least resume gainful work.
- View SP not as a cost, but rather, as one type of investment. A key element of this concept involves helping the poor to continue to have access to basic social services, to avoid social exclusion, and to resist coping strategies with irreversible negative-effects during adverse shocks.
- Focus less on the symptoms and more on the causes of poverty by providing the poor with the opportunity to adopt higher risk-return activities and avoiding inefficient and inequitable informal risk-sharing mechanisms.
- Take account of reality. Among the world population of 6 billion, less than a quarter have access to formal SP programmes, and less than 5 percent can rely on their own assets to successfully manage risk. Meanwhile, eliminating the poverty gap through public transfers is beyond the fiscal capacity of most developing countries.

The World Bank (2003), Holsmann and Jorgensen (2000), Holsmann and Jorgensen (2001), p. 530.

Academic literature

Barrientos et al. (2005)

Barrientos et al distinguish between two possible definitions of social protection:

[...] one can identify a contest between two different visions of social protection. One is a narrow vision: social protection is a means of providing short-term assistance to individuals and households to cope with shocks while they are temporarily finding new economic opportunities that will rapidly allow them to improve their situation. The other is a broader vision that sees social protection as having both short-term and long-term roles in poverty reduction: helping people to conserve and accumulate assets and to transform their socio-economic relationships so that they are not constrained from seizing opportunities by bonding or clientelism. In cases where people are dependent on others, because of age, infirmity or disability, then this broader vision envisages long-term forms of social assistance such as grants and non-contributory pensions. The narrow vision sees a clear distinction between social protection and livelihood promotion, while the broad vision sees them as being closely related.

Barrientos et al. (2005), p. 4

Ellis, Devereux and White (2009)

Viewed through the lens of risk and vulnerability, [...] social protection can be interpreted as offering the potential means for addressing the multiple factors causing persistent poverty and rising vulnerability.

Ellis et al. (2009), p. 7-8

Hickey (2007)

[...] politics is central to the ways in which social protection is emerging in Africa. Political institutions provide significant incentives for, and barriers to, action, while the ways in which key political actors and agencies engage with those in poverty is also critical. Issues of élite discourses and organisational culture and “*fit*” require as much attention as the more technocratic agendas of capacity-building. More broadly, political institutions and actors operate in a policy environment that is clearly shaped by socio-economic forces, particularly concerning public attitudes, levels and forms of inequality, and also processes of change, such as urbanisation. Donor agencies are critical policy actors in many African countries, and need to give social protection a higher priority and ensure its fuller integration with other elements of their policy agendas.

Hickey (2007), p. 9

Norton, Conway and Foster (2001)

Social protection consists of the public actions taken in response to levels of vulnerability, risk and deprivation, which are deemed socially unacceptable within a given polity or society. Social protection thus deals with both the absolute deprivation and the vulnerabilities of the poorest, and also with the need of the currently non-poor to have security in the face of shocks and life-cycle events. The “*public*” character of this response may be governmental or non-governmental, or may involve a combination of institutions from both sectors.

Norton et al. (2001), p. 7

Piron (2004)

A rights-based approach is normative and based upon the international human rights framework, which considers citizens as rights-holders and states as duty-bearers. A number of human rights principles, such as equality, non-discrimination, inclusion, participation and accountability, are derived from this framework. Under a rights-based approach, states are obliged to provide laws, regulatory frameworks, programmes and policies, which will all enhance the ability of households to manage risks and improve their standard of living. States should also respect human rights (i.e., not violate them

directly) and provide protection from violations by third parties. Minimum standards need to be provided, such as a basic form of education, primary healthcare and basic foodstuff. Under this approach, citizens are empowered to take their own decisions, mobilise, claim their rights and entitlements, and hold the state to account. Inclusion and participation in decision-making processes are key.

Piron 2004 (cited in Sheper et al. (2005), p. 8)

Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux (2007)

A transformative approach extends the definition of social protection beyond targeted income and consumption transfers that address chronic poverty and livelihood threats. Strategies to deal with social vulnerability must address the social justice that arises from structural inequalities and abuses of power, and transformative social protection must aim to achieve empowerment, equity and the realisation of economic social and cultural rights.

Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux (2007), p. 27

Sub Saharan African Governments¹³**Republic of Benin (2002)**

Social protection comprises all systems and measures that provide social assistance and various social services to the different social and professional groups. In Benin, a considerable effort has been made to ensure the physical, mental, and social and economic welfare of all strata of the society: children, men, women, the elderly, and handicapped, marginalised and indigent persons.

Republic of Benin, 2002, p. 70

Cape Verde (2004)

Social protection plays a key role in the context of the poverty reduction strategy. As part of the non-contributive regime of social protection in Cape Verde, various public and private entities are involved in different areas, such as families, children, the elderly, the handicapped and drug dependents. The goal of these interventions is to contribute to the protection and improvement of the living conditions of the poor and the excluded. Various programmes and activities are under way, ranging from school programmes to help poor students to fully-fledged social programmes to provide social facilities and services.

Republic of Cape Verde, 2004, p. 42

Republic of Chad (2003)

Social Protection measures may be institutional (laws, regulations...) and/or programmes and projects. Their function is to lessen vulnerability and ease the poverty of vulnerable groups. To this extent, they help to contain the excessive inequality and disparities between different social strata and to mitigate the possible negative impact of social and economic policy decisions and choices, and those of social unrest.

Republic of Chad, 2003, p. 70

Republic of Côte d'Ivoire (2002)

With regard to social protection, the government is committed to alleviating the difficult situation of the poor and the vulnerable groups through a consistent policy. The objectives consist of: (i) improving the living conditions of handicapped and vulnerable people (women, elderly); and ensuring coverage of infancy in an integrated fashion in disadvantaged districts.

Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, 2002, p. 73

Republic of Mali (2003)

Social Protection is a collective system for managing the risks faced by individuals. It comprises the following mechanisms:

- Social Security – the set of institutions that protect individuals from the risks set out by the 1952 Convention No. 102 of the ILO, namely, illness, maternity, disability, old-age, work-based accidents, and industrial illness, dependents and unemployment;
- Social assistance – the system based upon solidarity, which, in so far as it provides publicly founded benefits, tends mainly, by granting a variety of loans, to permit destitute people who have insufficient funds to survive, to re-train and to re-integrate themselves into the labour force;

13 These definitions were found in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers published by the IMF (www.imf.org). These papers are prepared by the member countries through a participatory process involving domestic stakeholders as well as external development partners, including the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. We are therefore aware that they are far from representing the genuine recipients' point of view, however, given the heterogeneity of definitions we believe that they represent the result of a bargaining between Governments and IMF/WB and are therefore at least partly representative of the recipients' view.

- The co-operative and social economy – comprising all forms and types of organisations, other than those of public origin, whose aim is produce and/or distribute goods and services, and which operate along democratic lines. Protection may also include certain insurance products available in the market.

Republic of Mali, 2003 p. 61

Republic of Nigeria (2005)

Social protection consists of interventions aimed at safeguarding the poor from becoming poorer and the non-poor from becoming poor.

Republic of Nigeria, 2005, p. 46

Republic of Uganda (2010)

Social Protection: this entails all public and private interventions that address vulnerabilities associated with being or becoming poor. Social protection is a public investment in human capital that facilitates risk-taking endeavours and also enables the poor to prevent, cope with, and mitigate, risks. These interventions currently include: the provision of social assistance to the chronically poor; care for the elderly, orphans and other vulnerable children; special-needs education and training; community-based re-habilitation services; social security for public sector and formal private sector employees; pensions for public sector employees and relief services to disaster victims. In addition, the government has promoted equal opportunities, operation of social security schemes, labour standards and occupational safety.

Republic of Uganda, 2010, p. 290

Republic of Zambia (2006)

Social protection refers to policies and practices that protect and promote the livelihoods and welfare of people suffering from critical levels of poverty and deprivation and/or are vulnerable to risks and shocks.

Republic of Zambia, 2006, p. 210

United Republic of Tanzania (2008)

The national focus of social protection is to address comprehensively structural and multi-causal vulnerabilities that can lead to persistent poverty and generalised insecurity. Thus, the National Social Protection Framework defines social protection in a comprehensive manner to include traditional family and community support structures, and interventions by state and non-state actors that support individuals, households and communities to prevent, manage, and overcome the risks threatening their present and future security and well-being, and to embrace opportunities for their development and for social and economic progress in Tanzania.

United Republic of Tanzania, 2008 p. 1

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