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Building climate resilience into social protection in Ghana

Social protection in Ghana

Social protection describes all initiatives that transfer income or assets to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks, and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalized. Public social protection policies and programmes in Ghana include:

- Social transfers: support to children in need of special care and protection, capitation grant scheme and school feeding programme.
- Labour market interventions: National Labour Standards, minimum wage legislation, regulations to protect the interests of workers
- Social insurance programmes: social security and pension schemes, National Health Insurance Scheme
- Humanitarian relief: disaster management, emergency food aid.

The role of social protection is therefore to assist Ghanaians get out of poverty and cope better with risks. In 2007, the Ministry of Manpower, Youth and Employment (MMYE) published the National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS), which represents the Government of Ghana's vision of "creating an all inclusive and socially empowered society through the provision of sustainable mechanisms for the protection of persons living in situations of extreme poverty and related vulnerability and exclusion." (Government of Ghana, 2007). One of the main features of the NSPS is the social grants scheme known as the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) Programme, which is to assist the poor to "cope with social risk and vulnerability".



The vulnerable will be most affected by climate change

Climate change and social protection

Climate variability and change constitute a major threat to national development. From a decline in precipitation to floods, sea level rise and increase in temperature, climate change imposes a limitation on national development efforts. The challenge is to turn climate change and variability into an opportunity. Social protection will become more and more important as an adaptation strategy as the frequency of climate-related events increase (Chaudhury et al. 2011; IDS, 2007). As approaches to minimising the risks faced by vulnerable people, social protection and climate change adaptation have much in common, as they both seek to protect the most vulnerable and promote resilience. Hence incorporating climate change adaptation into social protection would mean understanding the ways in which social protection interventions can potentially contribute to adaptation (Jones et al. 2010). This has been developed as a separate approach, called adaptive social policy (Table 1).

Currently social protection and climate change adaptation remain separate fields of research, policy and practice. There has been little emphasis on the long-term risks posed by climate change in social protection research. Likewise, climate change adaptation has not fully considered the policy and programmatic options that social protection can provide (Badahur, 2009).

Table 1: Promoting adaptation through social protection

Social protection category	Social protection instruments	Adaptation and disaster risk reduction benefits
Provision/protection (coping strategies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social service provision • Basic social transfers/safety nets (food/cash) • Pensions • Fee waivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of those most vulnerable to climate risks, with low levels of adaptive capacity
Preventive (coping strategies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social transfers • Livelihood diversification • Weather-indexed insurance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevents damaging coping strategies as a result of risks to weather-dependent livelihoods
Promotive (building adaptive capacity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social transfers • Access to credit/microfinance • Asset transfers/protection • Starter packs (drought/flood resistant) • Access to common property resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes resilience through livelihood diversification and security to withstand climate-related shocks • Promotes opportunities arising from climate change
Transformative (building adaptive capacity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of minority rights • Anti-discrimination campaigns • Social funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transforms social relations to combat discrimination underlying social and political vulnerability

Source: Jones et al. (2010)



The social dimension of climate change impacts cannot be ignored

References and Further Reading

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- Jones, L., Jaspars, S., Pavanello, S., Ludi, E., Slater, R., Arnall, A., Natasha, G. and Mtisi, S. (2010) Responding to a Changing Climate. Exploring how Disaster Risk Reduction, Social Protection and Livelihoods Approaches Promote Features of Adaptive Capacity.

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Way forward

To strengthen social protection and climate change adaptation approaches, there is the need for empirical research into the adaptive social protection framework. This framework characterizes social protection measures that acknowledge the changing nature of climate related impacts, including the future existence of conditions that have not been experienced before. The vulnerable need to be protected from the adverse impacts of climate change through effective social protection policies and programmes. Whilst we all have a role to play, the following should lead this drive:

- Ministry of Manpower Development Youth and Employment (Department of Social Welfare)/ Ministry of Environment Science and Technology
- EPA/NADMO
- NGOs/CSOs
- Research institutions
- Local communities (including traditional leaders)

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