

Session 1

Social Protection for the Poor and Poorest in Developing Countries

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Abstract

There is an emerging consensus around the view that social protection—"public actions taken in response to levels of vulnerability, risk, and deprivation which are deemed socially unacceptable within a given polity or society"—provides an effective response to poverty and vulnerability in developing countries. This is finding expression in the growing number of national governments adopting social protection strategies and in the rapidly expanding set of policies and programmes being implemented in developing countries. The Washington Consensus objections to social protection—"it causes welfare dependency and poor countries cannot afford it"—appear to have been laid to rest.

Key developing countries are introducing major social protection programmes—Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico and South Africa—and international development agencies are playing an active role. The IFIs, especially the World Bank, have focused on a relatively narrow concept of social protection as temporary social safety nets. By contrast, other agencies (ILO, DFID, GTZ, UNICEF) see social protection in broader terms and are taking a perspective that includes social pensions, child support grants, disability grants, health insurance and other approaches.

This paper describes the evolution of social protection in different regions of the developing world and examines a number of key issues that face social protection policies. These are: ***the role of public agencies, financing social protection, the scope of social protection, the scale of social protection, targeting or universal provision and the politics of social protection.***

It concludes that countries and donors can build on the growing knowledge base available about 'what works' in social protection but must be cautious about the international 'transfer of models'. While social protection can be treated as a policy option it also needs to be viewed historically as part of the evolutionary process by which developing countries determine the variety of capitalism they will pursue.

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Academic Degrees

- 1974 BA (Hons.) Economic Geography Class 2:1, University of Cambridge
- 1984 Ph. D. Land Settlement Schemes and Rural Development (Department of Geography), James Cook University, Queensland, Australia



Field of Study

Poverty and Human Development, Poverty Reduction Policies, Rural Development, The Role of NGOs and Civil Society in Development, Microfinance and Public Management