



## Social protection as an instrument for food and nutrition security

*Food basket with nutritious foods for pregnant women, Cambodia*

## Experience from implementing the Global Programme on Food and Nutrition Security, Enhanced Resilience

Social protection measures have a number of important functions, including protecting against and alleviating poverty and social deprivation, preventing the risk of poverty and social deprivation, and promoting income and improving livelihoods. In addition, they make a key contribution towards food and nutrition security, particularly in the context of crises.

The Global Programme on Food and Nutrition Security, Enhanced Resilience, which originally contained a total of 12 country packages, implements various social protection measures as part of its work. This aims to make lasting improvements to the nutritional situation of people at risk of food insecurity and to their resilience to food crises, particularly targeting women of reproductive age and infants. In addition to the primary food and nutrition security measures, various activities connected with social protection have therefore been implemented depending on the context.



Cash transfer invested in goats, Malawi

## Overview of social protection instruments for food and nutrition security



### ORIENTATION OF FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY THROUGH TRANSFERS

#### Instruments of social protection

- › Cash transfers
- › Food transfers, incl. school feeding
- › Social insurance systems
- › Micro insurance systems
- › Provision of social services



### FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY THROUGH ACCESS TO WORK

#### Instruments of social protection

- › Cash- or food-for-work programs



### FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY THROUGH REINFORCEMENT OF PRODUCTION

#### Instruments of social protection

- › Input subsidies (fertiliser, seed, fuel)
- › Transfer of means of production
- › Agricultural and weather insurance



### FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY THROUGH TRADE/MARKET ACCESS

#### Instruments of social protection

- › Food subsidies
- › Price stabilisation
- › National food reserves

Household surveys conducted at regular intervals in the project regions of the partner countries to determine the nutritional situation of women and infants have shown that **social protection measures underpinning the measures implemented by the global programme can enhance their effectiveness**. Households have differing amounts of resources (e.g. access to land) even within the target group at risk of food insecurity. The poorest households in the target group have been found to benefit less from the measures implemented by the programme to improve nutrition, but that social protection programmes can enable them to draw equal benefit from the measures. It is therefore advisable to take the social protection/food and nutrition security nexus systematically into account when taking portfolio decisions and designing projects in future.

**Money transfers** can prevent people from having to resort to negative coping strategies in emergencies (such as selling agricultural production goods, reducing meals and meal quality) or can enable them to make important small-scale investments that open up long-term prospects. The Malawi country package has repeatedly used money transfers as a crisis response measure: in 2018, it provided money transfers to support vulnerable households for three months, combined with measures to raise awareness about healthy diets. In 2022, vulnerable households in the project area received a sizeable one-off payment of the equivalent of USD 350 to mitigate the consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine (in particular increases in prices for staple foods and means of production) and at the same time were given advice on climate-resilient agriculture. Here, the programme cooperated with the specialised organisation GiveDirectly.

Adapted from GIZ (2017), p. 15.



Community Nutritious Gardens with MGNREGA Employment Scheme, India

Households have received **food transfers** in response to crises in four country packages so far. In India, for example, ‘Nutri-mix’ rations made up of locally available millet, lentils, maize and soya for infants were distributed to families that had to leave their homes because of the COVID-19 crisis. Another intervention implemented as part of the COVID-19 special measures involved distributing “food baskets” of nutrient-rich food to pregnant women in Cambodia every two weeks for a period of six months.

Social transfers can also take the form of **cash-for-work** measures, in which people usually work together to create or maintain key public goods such as infrastructure (e.g. roads, irrigation systems, erosion protection) and are paid for their work. Three country packages have implemented cash-for-work measures so far. In Mali, they were used to rehabilitate pastureland and remove sand from watering points, for example. In India, the programme has teamed up with MGNREGS, the state employment scheme, to promote community gardens growing nutrient-rich food. In Yemen, communities themselves chose which public goods to rehabilitate using cash-for-work measures.

**School feeding programmes** are another important social protection instrument. As transfer measures, they ensure that children receive a daily meal, thereby also improving access to education (particularly for girls), as they provide an additional incentive for families to send their children to school. Moreover, in combination with education measures on nutrition and hygiene, they also help change people’s behaviour. In addition, they provide a good opportunity for local producers to sell nutritious food, thus enabling them to earn income. In Togo, the country package cooperated with the UN World Food Programme in a pilot measure to support the national school feeding programme. As part of this measure, nutritious crops promoted by the project (such as sweet potatoes rich in vitamin A) were included in school meals at selected schools, the necessary produce was purchased from local producers, and awareness-raising campaigns and recipes developed by the project were integrated. The aim is always to scale up the approaches if they prove successful when trialled. In Madagascar, the project managed to ensure that local producers supplied nutritious food to schools selected for a school feeding programme funded by the USAID.



Savings Group, Zambia

**Savings groups** are a measure implemented in a number of country packages. They are being supported in Burkina Faso, Cambodia, India, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Togo and Zambia. In Zambia, for example, the country package supports villagers in organising themselves in savings groups and provides them with financial literacy training, among other things, in line with the Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) approach. During the first savings cycle, which lasts between six and twelve months, supervisors visit the savings groups once a week to provide support. The savings groups enable the villagers to build up financial reserves together and to provide one another with smallish loans. Savings are used to buy better food, to cover health care costs and school fees or to invest in agricultural production, for example.

The **transfer of means of production** is the most widespread category of social protection measures in the global programme and at the same time the one with the broadest definition. It includes the provision of seeds and small-scale tools for agricultural production. As support for crop production is part of the concept in all the country packages (albeit in different forms) to increase the availability of nutritious food, this category is also found in all the packages. One example is Benin, where the COVID-19 assistance measures included giving vulnerable households mung bean seeds and providing them with training on how

to grow the plants and on the advantages they offer. In addition, moringa, baobab and papaya planting material was distributed in schools, women's groups and health centres. In Ethiopia, households affected by food insecurity were given orange sweet potato cuttings, which contain more vitamin A than the white variety, and received training on how to grow them.

**Food subsidies** as a social protection measure have been supported in two cases so far. In India, the programme contributed to refining the state-run Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), one of the world's largest public social protection schemes. Through the TPDS, vulnerable households can purchase certain amounts of particular foodstuffs at subsidised prices from specific points of sale. As part of its work on governance, the programme provided advice on digitalising the TPDS benefits and on integrating pulses into the range of foodstuffs available through the TPDS. In Cambodia, the programme promoted a specific food subsidy model in which farming cooperatives received inputs and in return sold rice, vegetables and fruit at discounted prices to vulnerable households.



Plot of Vitamin-A-rich sweet potato done with transferred means of production, Ethiopia

An overarching method for leveraging the potential of social protection measures for food and nutrition security involves **policy advice on the nutrition-sensitive design of social protection systems**. This is in line with the priority area of German development cooperation in the field of social protection, which concentrates on strengthening systems. The programme focuses on this policy advice in Malawi and Cambodia in particular, although the promotion of multisectoral coordination is part of the governance work of all the country packages in the global programme. In Malawi, the country package supported the national Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection Task Force set up in 2019, assisting with activities such as implementing the Food Security and Nutrition Inter-Agency Social Protection Assessment (FSN ISPA) with a view to identifying gaps and opportunities relating to food and nutrition security in Malawi's current political framework and social protection programmes. Nutrition-related aspects were subsequently explicitly integrated into the social protection policy and, conversely, social protection was included as a priority topic in food policy.

#### Further links

Devereux, Stephen/Sabates-Wheeler, Rachel (2004). **Transformative social protection**.

European Union (2022). **N4D Nutrition Quick Tips Series. Social Protection and Nutrition**.

FAO (2015). **Nutrition and Social Protection**.

FAO e-learning on Linkages between food security, nutrition and social protection: **An introduction to basic concepts and principles**.

GIZ (2017). **The role of social protection for food and nutrition security**.

GIZ (2022). **Proof of Impact – Global Programme Food and Nutrition Security, Enhanced Resilience**.

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