



SDC-IDS Collaboration on Poverty, Politics and Participatory Methodologies

Briefing Paper

LIGHT-TOUCH MAPPING OF SDC ACTIVITIES IN SOCIAL PROTECTION

INTRODUCTION

Social protection is not explicitly mentioned as part of SDC's strategic objectives 2017-2020 or listed as a SDC priority theme (as outlined in 'Dispatch 2017-2020'). Yet many SDC country offices do engage with social protection – either through their support of wider policy frameworks or by providing input into specific interventions. As social protection is not a separate theme within SDC, there is no direct overview of activities that are undertaken in this area across the organisation. This note presents findings of a light-touch mapping exercise aiming to obtain insight into the ongoing engagements with social protection across SDC. It is based on information obtained from geographical divisions guided by a basic definition of social protection.

The basic definition used for the purpose of this mapping categorises social protection interventions along three types: (1) social assistance, (2) social insurance, and (3) labour market policies.

Social assistance refers to non-contributory and regular transfers to the poor and most vulnerable, either cash or in-kind. They are often targeted at those in poverty who have little to no means to improve their own livelihoods, including children, elderly and people with disabilities. Instruments include child grants and social transfers.

Social insurance refers to contributory insurance schemes that 'prevent' people from falling into poverty following a shock in their lives, such as illness, pregnancy, drought or, floods. Social insurance aims to reach everyone vulnerable to such shocks, thereby moving beyond reaching exclusively the poor. Instruments include unemployment insurance and agricultural insurance.

Labour market policies encompass two different kinds of policies. The first refers to the creation of employment and 'promotion' of livelihoods, such as public works and credit schemes. The second type refers to the legal frameworks and standards underpinning the labour market, including minimum wage legislation, maternity leave policy and child care arrangements.

This note presents a non-exhaustive overview SDC support to social protection activities in these three categories, aiming to provide an indication of the range of current activities.

1. SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Social assistance is the most widely supported category of social protection. This follows the inventory of country- and regionally specific engagements but also global support to humanitarian and protracted crises.

In Eastern Europe, engagements in Albania, Bulgaria and Serbia focus particularly on social inclusion of Roma populations through food and other in-kind transfers. Support to social assistance in West Africa, such as in Mali and Niger, deal mostly with issues of food security through distribution of free food and cash transfers primarily in response to shocks. In South and East Asia, SDC supports programmes that aim to facilitate access to social

assistance, such as the establishment of One Stop Shops in Nepal and improvement of efficacy of local governance in Bangladesh. SDC engages with cash transfer programmes in East and Southern Africa and Latin America and Caribbean, including a pilot project targeting vulnerable rural households in Bolivia and government programme targeting ultra-poor and labour-constrained households in Zimbabwe. There appears to be no support to social assistance in countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and South Asia.

2. SOCIAL INSURANCE

SDC's support to social insurance focuses on two categories - health insurance and agricultural/ weather-based insurance – and can be considered the second most important pillar of support.

Support to health insurance schemes is particularly prominent in CIS. In Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan and Ukraine, for example, health projects support health insurance and fee exemptions. Countries in West Africa, East Africa and South Asia also receive support with health insurance schemes, including promotion of mutual health insurance in Chad and Benin, improving subscription to community health funds in Tanzania and establishment of a scheme for garment workers in Bangladesh.

A range of agricultural and weather-based insurance schemes are supported in East and Southern Africa, East and South Asia and Latin America and Caribbean. This includes agricultural micro-insurance to smallholders in Tanzania and farmers in Bolivia and Cuba. SDC supports index-based crop insurance schemes in Malawi and Zambia and index-based livestock insurance in Mongolia. Micro-insurance schemes more explicitly responding to large shocks include catastrophe micro-insurance in Haiti and Nicaragua.

There appears to be no support to social insurance in the Western Balkan or new Member states.

3. LABOUR MARKET POLICIES

Support to labour market policies – either in terms of livelihoods support or wider input into legislative frameworks or accountability mechanisms – appears to be the smallest pillar in terms of SDC's engagement with social protection. The exercise does not provide evidence for support to labour market policies in the CIS, West Africa and South Asia regions, for example. These findings are likely due to underestimation however, as it might be most difficult to identify support to this category from within wider engagements with SDC priority themes.

In terms of livelihoods support, there are examples of support to vocational training programmes, such as in Mongolia, programmes aiming to strengthen micro- and small-scale rural enterprise in Bolivia, including access to financial services and support to promoting off-farm employment in the Great Lakes region in Africa. With respect to legislative frameworks, the global programme on migration and development supports protection and decent work of migrants in the Middle East and Sri Lanka. In Romania, SDC engages with capacity building of labour unions and fostering collaboration between government and social partners.

REGIONAL OVERVIEW

The table below provides a schematic overview of engagements with social protection across regions. It highlights the mixed geographic involvement of SDC with respect to categories of social protection. There is a strong emphasis on social assistance in East Europe and Africa and heavy focus on social insurance in CIS and Africa. Involvement in labour market policies is more mixed and spread across all regions apart from Africa. Global initiatives are strong in terms of social assistance, primarily as a result of cash transfers in humanitarian aid, and labour market policies, mostly due to the migration and development programme.

Table 1 Overview of SDC engagement with social protection by region

	social assistance	social insurance	labour market policies
<i>Western Balkan</i>	xxx		x
<i>New Member States</i>	xxx		x
<i>Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)</i>		xxx	
<i>West Africa</i>	xx	xx	
<i>East and Southern Africa</i>	xx	xx	
<i>East Asia</i>	x	x	x
<i>South Asia</i>	x	x	x
<i>Latin America and Caribbean</i>	x	xx	xx
<i>Global initiatives</i>	xxx		x

CONCLUSION

Results of this mapping exercise clearly indicate that SDC had widespread engagement with social protection across all its categories in all regions. It is important to note that the support to these various social protection interventions does not take place in its own right but rather occurs as part of support to a SDC priority theme. SDC's engagement with Zimbabwe's Household Social Cash Transfer (HSCT) programme is a case in point: this cash transfer programme is part of Zimbabwe's wider National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children, which SDC supports as part of its regional support in the HIV/AIDS domain. Hence, social protection can be considered an important element of SDC's multi-faceted approach to reaching its strategic objectives.

The results of this exercise highlight how SDC adopts a flexible approach in framing its support to social protection, fitting in with national contexts, relevant policy frameworks and strategies or wider multilateral collaborations, as opposed to pushing for a particular agenda or approach. This puts SDC in a unique position, thereby adding value to the field of social protection in comparison to other donors and agencies (see separate briefing paper for more detail on agency positions). SDC's wide-ranging engagement across country contexts (from MICs to protracted crises), modes of intervention (from high-level policy advocacy to programme implementation) and social protection instruments (from cash transfers to micro-insurance and local governance) leads to a rich set of experience and expertise that generate lessons learned and best practices that are relevant within SDC and beyond. These could feed into many of the current debates in social protection (see separate briefing paper for more detail on 'hot topics'), including how to leverage political will, create fiscal sustainability, build systems, link to the informal labour market and maximise social protection's impact. Finally, SDC's current engagements with social protection also ensure the ability to adapt and be flexible in response to country-specific needs and policy contexts. It has to be noted that this may risk a fragmented and confused approach, requiring reflection on whether SDC's engagement with social protection needs to be underpinned by a more coherent approach towards social protection.

This note was written in February 2016 by Keetie Roelen (IDS) based on findings from a light-touch mapping exercise as undertaken by Anne Moulin (SDC) in January – February 2016.