



Bringing social protection down to earth: Integrating climate resilience and social protection for the most vulnerable

Dr Angelo Bonfiglioli
Dr Carol Watson

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1. INTRODUCTION

Recent conceptual innovations, such as ‘social protection through a livelihood lens’ (Devereux, 2006), ‘adaptive social protection’ (Davies et al, 2008a), ‘climate change adaptation’ (Davies et al, 2008; Davies and Leavy, 2009), and ‘climate resilience’ (UN/ISDR, 2004; Parry et al, 2007), and ‘the social dimensions of climate change’ (Mearns and Norton, 2010) have helped strengthen linkages between social protection and environmental/climate concerns. These have been coupled – in social protection - with programme and policy approaches privileging livelihood support to vulnerable households and/or focusing on social transfers, social safety nets and food security as part of overall poverty reduction strategies (cf. Devereux, 2003; RHVP, 2008).

Early exploration of the impact of climate change on the poor (DFID 2004 a, b, c, d) helped pave the way to greater analytical integration between social protection and climate change, while a growing literature has helped to define common issues more clearly, strengthen awareness of interrelated risks, vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities, and identify priorities for research and action (cf. inter alia Davies et al, 2008a,b,c; Davies and Leavy, 2009; Davies et al, 2009; Heltberg et al, 2008a,b,c; and Oswald, 2009). Some literature has pointed to the importance of bringing in other distinct streams of thinking and action around, for example, small-holder wellbeing and agricultural development (Sabates-Wheeler et al, 2009; Devereux, 2009; Futures Agriculture, 2009) as well as disaster risk reduction (Jones et al, 2010). An increasing number of positive programmes and examples of strategic synergies and promising mechanisms are also being documented, particularly in Africa (Hess and Syroka, 2005; Alderman and Haque, 2007; Hellmuth, 2007), but also, for example, in Asia (cf. Mallick, 2006; Heltberg, 2007).

Nevertheless, most policies, plans and interventions continue to be developed and carried out in separate silos. National social protection strategies, for example, often neglect environmental issues, while emerging National Adaptation Programmes of Action to Climate Change (NAPAs) systematically neglect social protection concerns. This represents a missed opportunity to heighten positive synergies between programmatic responses to different forms of intersecting vulnerabilities and leads to wasteful overlap in activities on the ground which is detrimental to the sustainability of such efforts. While part of the problem may stem from remaining conceptual weaknesses in sustaining a holistic view of risks, vulnerabilities and the integrated strategies required to address them, other challenges arise from the compartmentalized nature of development planning and implementation in a sectoral world where specialist streams of discipline-specific knowledge interact with and reinforce bureaucratic fiefdoms wherein incentives for interaction are few. This can have the effect of creating what can often seem to be impermeable boundaries between, for example, social, economic, and environmental ministries and their international technical support agencies which must come together to address common issues linking social protection and climate change.

The challenge is a twin one – on the one hand of integrating environmental issues into social protection policies, plans and programmes, and on the other hand of building social protection components into adaptive responses to climate change. After providing a brief overview of current conceptual frameworks, tools and mechanisms in the two fields (sections 2 and 3), this paper aims to contribute to

efforts to meet this challenge by identifying a number of social protection mechanisms that can be particularly responsive to climate change challenges (section 4), along with a number of climate resilience mechanisms that can be designed to take greater account of social protection issues (section 5). Key policy implications and challenges for greater integration are then highlighted to enrich reflection on the way forward (section 6), followed by general conclusions (section 7). Examples used in the paper are drawn primarily from sub-Saharan Africa.

2. SOCIAL PROTECTION: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK, TOOLS AND MECHANISMS

Social protection has become an increasingly popular mechanism to address multiple forms of livelihood and life cycle risk and vulnerability in recent years, and as a means of accelerating progress on all of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as part of overall national poverty reduction strategies. Evidence is mounting of the positive potential of social protection as an instrument to reduce the multiple dimensions and inter-generational transmission of poverty; promote human capital development through improved health, nutrition and education outcomes; and address barriers to gender equality and empowerment (UNICEF, 2010). Social protection has specifically been seen as an important mechanism to help poor and vulnerable households to safeguard their assets and adopt effective coping strategies to meet challenges arising from man-made and natural disasters, economic crises and climate change. This allows households to invest in more productive but often riskier livelihood strategies (OECD, 2009).

While various definitions and conceptual frameworks have been developed and are further evolving around social protection, this paper adopts its articulation as: “All public and private initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks, and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalized; with the overall objective of reducing the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable and marginalized groups” (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004). Operationally, within this definition, social protection refers to “The set of all initiatives, both formal and informal, that provide *social assistance* to extremely poor individuals and households; *social services* to groups who need special care or would otherwise be denied access to basic services; *social insurance* to protect people against the risks and consequences of livelihood shocks; and *social equity* to protect people against social risks such as discrimination or abuse” (ibid.). Under the ‘transformative’ agenda that this definition sets out, social protection is seen to embrace four interlinking dimensions through measures designed for protection, prevention, promotion and transformation.

A broad array of social protection mechanisms and tools includes both contributory and non-contributory systems designed to help households and individuals to manage risks, smooth consumption, and build capacities. Social assistance measures commonly include non-contributory social transfers in both cash and in kind such as cash transfers, food aid and nutrition supplementation, fee exemptions, and social pensions, which are increasingly popular redistributive public initiatives to offer safety nets against extreme poverty. Specialized social services include those focused on the vulnerabilities of particular categories of population, such as the disabled, or that offer protection for children and women against violence or neglect. Social insurance systems, which are often contributory but may be subsidized, include both social health insurance, protecting against health shocks throughout the life-cycle and other kinds of livelihood or asset insurance (against unemployment, for example, or disasters). Measures for social equity include legislation and policies aimed at the protection and promotion of social and economic rights and measures to combat discrimination.

3. CLIMATE RESILIENCE: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK, TOOLS AND MECHANISMS

Drawn from ecology, the concept of ‘resilience’ originally defines an ecosystem response to any form of disturbance and damage, such as flooding, fires or even human activity. Growingly applied to human systems, it stresses their capacity to change, adapt, and recover from shocks, thus fulfilling their main social, economic and reproductive functions. Developed within the context of environmental change and climate variability, the ‘resilience’ paradigm is about flexible adaptation to change – being thus close to the ‘sustainability’ concept, which is about the ability to deal flexibly with the future in the context of demographic, social, economic and political change (Adger et al, eds. 2001).

‘Climate resilience’ is seen by this paper as an important mechanism to help poor and vulnerable households to adapt their behaviors, techniques and practices to the increasingly disruptive effects of climate change and variability. As a development approach, it includes a specific policy framework, with appropriate institutions, mechanisms and tools. These include assessment methodologies addressing environmental, social and economic impacts of climate change and variability; multifocal and multi-layered systems of climate forecasting and information; initiatives aimed at building institutional capacities, as well as an integrated system involving research, scaling up and dissemination of sustainable water and land management (SWLM) techniques and practices.¹

4. SOCIAL PROTECTION TOOLS AND MECHANISMS TO BOLSTER CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION

The arsenal of social protection mechanisms can be adapted to respond to specific vulnerabilities arising out of climate-related risks, through particular measures designed as follows:

- **Social transfers** (in cash or kind) can be specifically designed to bolster threatened livelihoods by providing not only safety nets in times of ecological crisis or food insecurity, but offering households the potential for longer-term investment. Regular transfers over a sufficiently long period can allow vulnerable households to both meet their immediate needs and to maintain and build up assets and productive capacity necessary to weather crises. They thus serve multiple functions of protection, prevention and promotion, particularly when accompanied by other measures linked to rural development and technical outreach support to promote growth and economic stability for beneficiary households. Depending on environmental and market conditions, transfers can take the form of animals, agricultural instruments/equipment, or cash for long term investment. The existence of the systems necessary to distribute such transfers is in itself a social safety net, as it can allow for rapid intensification or extension in times of environmental crisis. A growing literature has documented the effectiveness of social transfers for multi-dimensional poverty reduction (see, for example, RHVP, 2007; Save the Children, 2007b; Ellis et al, 2009; Hanlon et al, 2010).

¹ An interesting approach has recently been advocated worldwide by the creation of a specific pilot programme for climate resilience (PPCR), under the Strategic Climate Fund (SCF) set up by a group of major development banks (the African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Inter-American Development Bank, and the World Bank Group (see the CIF Web site: <http://www.climateinvestmentfunds.org/cif/>). One of the explicit objectives of the PPCR approach is to help national governments of selected countries reflecting the range of representative climate hazards (i.e., in terms of droughts, floods, tropical storms, storm surges, typhoons, river floodplains, etc.) to move towards a strategic approach that integrates climate resilience into development policies and planning.

- **Subsidized sale of agro-pastoral inputs** can be directed to producers living in areas of significant environmental risk but who are still able to depend on their own productive assets. This allows for asset protection to avoid negative coping strategies such as distress sale of animals and/or lands and also helps guard against over-exploitation of and pressure on natural resources, such as forest products, etc. Examples from Niger include regular price subsidies on wheat and cotton seed as part of the national food security strategy targeting ‘zones at risk;’ distribution of motor-pumps, tractors, fodder, small ruminants, animal vaccines and subsidized animal feed as well as construction of cereal banks as part of the Special Initiative of the President (using HIPC funds); and subsidized sale of fertilizer with the support of the World Bank.² Another example operating at country-wide level is the Inputs Subsidy Programme (ISP) in Malawi which provides subsidized fertilizer and maize seed with the aim of raising small farm agricultural production through the timely use of improved farm inputs and cultivation practices. Though some ambiguities persist in the targeting and management of the programme, and debate continues over the advisability of such large scale public intervention in agricultural markets, subsidy programmes continue to be an option considered by a number of governments (case study 11 in Ellis et al, 2009, pp 234-243).
- **Measures to promote sources of alternative energy or energy-saving devices for poor households:** Environmental protection measures seeking, for example, to preserve forest coverage, often confront the challenge of lack of alternative energy sources for poor households who depend on wood or charcoal for their cooking needs. Draconian measures (generally enforced by paramilitary bodies) to prohibit the use of natural resources for household energy needs, such as laws prohibiting the cutting down of trees or production and sale of charcoal will have disproportionately negative effects on the vast majority of the poor – and particularly women - who depend on such natural resources for their energy needs, and are thus contradictory to the basic premises of social protection. Such conservation efforts must therefore be accompanied – if not preceded, by parallel efforts to expand access to alternative sources of energy (through, for example, subsidized distribution of propane) or investment in and distribution of improved technologies (improved cook stoves, renewable energy technologies, for example including solar cookers). “Energy security” is increasingly identified as a concern in both humanitarian and development contexts and a key factor for social protection to take into consideration in the context of climate change (cf OCHA, 2010).
- **Social insurance mechanisms built upon seasonal dimensions of risk and vulnerability** offer potential to cushion small holders and pastoralists living in risk-prone areas against the worst shocks of production failure linked to climate conditions. Weather-indexed crop insurance is one such measure. In a pilot project in Malawi, for example, farmers entered into a loan agreement with an interest rate that includes a weather insurance premium. The loan enabled households to access an input package including improved groundnut seed. In the event of a severe drought (as measured by the rainfall index), the borrower would pay only a fraction of the loan due, while the rest is paid by the insurer directly to the lender. The insurance guarantee against the loan allows high-risk and low-income farmers to obtain credit to invest in seeds and other inputs for higher yielding crops (Hellmuth et al, 2007; see also Alderman and Haque, 2007; World Bank, 2009). Because the poor are the most vulnerable to immediately climate-based production failures, such insurance represents a real form of ‘insurance against poverty’ (Dercon, 2004) and becomes in this way an instrument of social justice. (See also DFID, 2004 on insurance, and Park, 2005 on financial innovation for climate change).

² See: <http://www.cic.ne/>

- **Social protection for the health and nutrition impacts of seasonal climate changes and environmental change and degradation** is often overlooked in both social protection policies and programmes and in climate change strategies. Yet the links between health and environment are well known and are by most accounts intensifying (cf Perry et al, 2007; WHO, 2010). These include seasonal epidemics such as meningitis; skin and eye diseases linked to arid winds; acute respiratory infections taking their toll in the winter months; malnutrition arising from a complex variety of causes including environmental factors; diarrheal diseases and cholera outbreaks arising from worsening conditions of environmental sanitation; malaria's geographic and seasonal spikes. Social protection measures – bringing together ministries of health, environment and social welfare, can include intensified vaccination campaigns in areas and among populations at greatest risk; broader social health insurance coverage including through mutual insurance schemes; public investment and public works linked to provision of water and environmental sanitation; intensified action for malaria eradication; nutrition promotion and supplementation programmes, particularly for children and women.
- **Public works programmes** can be specifically designed to include the organization of remunerated seasonal labor intensive activities taking place during the 'peak' periods of the year, in order to avoid interference with local agricultural work. While providing beneficiaries with income to protect their livelihoods and productive assets, this activity will also address local environmental, economic and social priority needs. Such programmes include most of the sustainable land and water management activities as well as other complementary activities (such as those related to: hygiene and sanitation of the habitat, collection and management of domestic waste, wastewater drainage; and maintenance of collective social and economic facilities, environmental services, protection of wildlife, and protection of biodiversity). In one example in Mali, the region of Niono has made extensive use of high labour intensive public works for environmental programmes, including eradication of water plants harmful to rice cultivation and the establishment of canal surveillance brigades. These programmes had the double advantage of addressing underemployment, particularly of young people in the region.³
- **Expansion of micro-finance services and support** to the poorest and most vulnerable households can serve a variety of needs for basic livelihood investments, including those required to confront climate change and environmental risks. Such services should include both savings and credit, and should be accompanied by capacity development and support for their organization and management. Building such services on existing forms of community savings and revolving loan schemes (such as the 'tontines' widespread among women in many African societies) and linking them as well to existing community insurance measures (such as cereal banks) can help anchor them in local value systems thereby increasing their potential impact. In Niger, widespread use is made of a warranty system (*warrantage*) which is a guaranteed loan to a producer at harvest time for stocked agricultural products (cereals, onions, etc.) whose commercial value is expected to increase over time. This allows the producer to avoid selling their produce at low prices during the harvest period and to benefit from supplementary income several months afterwards when prices are higher (Wampfler, 2008).⁴ The 'warrantage' system is currently practiced mainly in high yield agricultural areas and/or for commercial crops. However, it could be adapted to areas of high climate risk (for example by extending the time period for reimbursement; integrating weather-

³ See: www.office-du-niger.org/ml

⁴ See also : <http://www.unctad.info/upload/SUC/MaliGumArabicWorkshop/DistributionNoteSurWarrantage.PDF>
<http://www.fao.org/ag/Agl/fldproj.stm>

index insurance ; or linking it to subsidies aimed at improving storage conditions). Design features of micro finance systems and products to counter exclusion and ensure the broadest social protection should take into account the lack of collateral of the poorest (including, particularly, women) as well as other potential social limitations. Introduction of new technologies, such as mobile phone-based banking systems, would be an additional advantage, as for example, in the M-Pesa experience in Kenya (Mas and Morawczynski, 2009).

- **Support to positive local adaptation combined with measures to guard against negative coping strategies:** Local households and communities employ a number of strategies to both cope with and adapt to negative or uncertain environmental conditions. Many of these involve decisions on the economic deployment of household members. Seasonal and/or longer term urban-rural migration of active household members in search of off-farm employment can be seen as one such strategy with potential for both positive and negative effects: mechanisms to support the development of off-farm employment in urban areas must be coupled with enhanced social protection for the household members (often the most vulnerable) left behind in the rural zones. Withdrawal of children from school and their enlistment in intensified labour activities is another strategy that is frequently employed, but with clear negative impacts on both social well being and human capital development: social protection measures such as cash transfers to vulnerable household conditional on children's attendance at school coupled with safety nets such as school lunches and take-home rations can be options to allow households to avoid such practices (Latin America provides particularly successful and well-known examples of this approach through such programmes as *Oportunidades* (Mexico) and *Bolsa Familia* (Brazil).
- **Strengthening essential socioeconomic infrastructure:** Comprehensive social protection depends as much on the supply of essential social and economic services and infrastructure as on demand: while a number of the specific social protection measures outlined above aim to enhance demand by supporting the capacity of vulnerable groups to access services, complementary efforts must be made to ensure the provision of strong, functioning and quality services in the first place. The UN Social Protection Floor initiative recognizes the need to ensure a basic minimum through increased investment in social services and infrastructure and is gearing up to mobilize resources for this, but is focusing particularly on social infrastructure.⁵ In geographic areas particularly prone to climate risks and hazards, however, additional efforts are needed to (i) enhance environmental infrastructure and natural capital, and (ii) bolster social infrastructure against climate damage. Protection and rehabilitation of socio-economic collective facilities located in areas with high climate risks would include, for example: more weather-resistant health centres, nutrition centres for children, maternity hospitals, primary schools, markets, slaughterhouses, vaccination parks, feeder roads, water supply systems, small water infrastructure, and food storage facilities.

4. 'CLIMATE RESILIENCE' MECHANISMS THAT TAKE ACCOUNT OF SOCIAL PROTECTION

The arsenal of climate resilience mechanisms can be adapted to respond to specific vulnerabilities of the most poor and vulnerable households, through particular measures designed as follows:

⁵ A national *Social Protection Floor* takes a holistic view of social protection, addressing service provision (the "supply side") and the means to ensure effective access, including through transfers (the "demand side"). A population's exposure to natural hazards is one of the factors of vulnerability to be considered. The *service focus includes*: "Ensuring the availability, continuity, geographical and financial access to essential services such as water and sanitation, food and adequate nutrition, health, education, housing and other social services such as life and asset saving information" (UN, 2010).

- **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)** methodologies, increasingly adopted by major international institutions and demanded by national governments, can be specifically designed to better identify and assess possible positive or negative environmental, social and economic impacts of climate risks on the most poor and vulnerable households and categories of people. Participatory techniques for local level analysis, such as those developed for “climate vulnerability and capacity analysis” (CARE, 2009) and the “adaptive capacity framework analysis” (ACCRA, 2010; Jones et al, 2010a) would be particularly appropriate.
- **Climate forecasting and information systems** aim to strengthen human, material and technical capacities to process climate data and conduct in-depth analysis of the impacts of climate variability and change. These can be specifically designed to reinforce and complement food crises early warning systems and address not only the concerns of ministerial departments and research centers, but also those the needs of key local stakeholders (including local government officials, local technical services, producer associations and the private sector). These systems should provide concrete and practical guidance, in a clear and simple language using adequate technologies, to agriculturalists and pastoralists in areas prone to climate risks (on timely meteorological information for decisions concerning pastoral migrations, revision and promotion of planting calendars, use of crop varieties and animal breeds that are better suited to climate and agro-ecological zones, etc.).
- **Sustainable Water and Land Management** strategies and practices can be better designed in order to enable poor rural communities to become more resilient to climate change by conserving soil and water, restoring productive natural resources, and rehabilitating fragile lands,⁶ but also increasing food production and improving food security and nutrition. A holistic and multifocal SWLM would particularly be valuable in dryland ecosystems, characterized by extreme rainfall variability and unpredictability, recurrent droughts, high temperatures, strong winds, high salinity, and low soil fertility, and not only, as it has been done more often than not, in focused in areas of more favorable agro-climatic conditions and market access. In Niger, for instance, more than US\$ 400 million have been invested over last three decades in programmes promoting sustainable land management and other activities aimed at rehabilitating fragile lands. Reported results of such investments include increased vegetation, reduced erosion, rehabilitation and greater utilization of degraded lands, improved agricultural yields, increased forage for herds, greater availability of water, improved food security and well-being for vulnerable groups, and the reduction of poverty, among other things. The experience is considerable and the techniques effective. However, coverage has been limited and focused in areas of more favorable agro-climatic conditions and market access. Less than eight percent of villages in Niger have participated in the major SLWM programmes, which have focused particularly in the regions of Dosso, Tillabery and Tahoua (Pender et al, 2008).

SWLM usually includes practices such as the following:

- i. vegetative measures (tree nurseries and plantation, vegetative bands, windbreaks, etc.) for the production of timber (long term) and forage (short term);

⁶ Most of agricultural programmes traditionally target the development of lands with commercial potential, although the bulk of rural population lives in marginal lands. The notion of ‘fragile land’ includes land with soils unsustainable for agriculture, lands in slope areas and fragile forest ecosystems.

- ii. dune fixation, to combat wind erosion and reduce the silting of agricultural areas, water sources and habitat;
- iii. agro-forestry initiatives, to integrate tress end shrubs into production systems, for production of fodder or wood, and use their qualities as fertilizers;
- iv. physical soil and water conservation measures (such as stone bunds, banquettes, small dikes and mini water-catchments) to harvest rain water and improve plant growth;
- v. watershed management (such as protection of soil on slopes);
- vi. burning: reducing unplanned burning of forest and grazing areas and supporting planned and efficient burning (to promote regeneration of plants and maintain suitable habitat for animals).

Evidence from many countries suggests that SWLM practices play a critical role in improving food security, by halting the downward cycle of land degradation and negative climate impact and in increasing the resilience of rural communities to climate variability and to mitigating the effects of change through increasing agriculture productivity and profitability, building soil carbon stocks, conserving biodiversity, etc.

5. TOWARDS GREATER INTEGRATION: POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Building on the tools and approaches outlined above, and from the perspective of a transformative agenda for social protection, a variety of options are possible for greater integration of programmes seeking to promote social protection and climate resilience. At the same time, a number of challenges remain in efforts to achieve such integration that may require further collective thinking, along with accompanying measures to support more holistic approaches to social protection and climate resilience. These include the following:

- **Integration of social and geographic targeting** is needed in order to focus programme interventions household needs for social protection in areas prone to severe climate risks. While social protection systems and climate change adaptation initiatives may be planned and implemented separately as independent programmes in some parts of a country, the integrated approach outlined by this paper is most appropriate for those parts of the country that are most affected by climate risks. This arises from a number of considerations, including cost (integrated approaches may be too costly at national level), but also for considerations of effectiveness (since key vulnerabilities are not always linked to climate) and equity (intensified and multi-faceted approaches are needed to combat the most extreme deprivation and vulnerability arising from climate risks). Geographically targeted financing arrangements may also be designed, with differential benefits favouring the most vulnerable.
- **Early warning and information management systems**, which currently operate in mono-focal fashion, need to be redesigned and/or refined and integrated in order to capture multiple dimensions/indicators of inter-related risks related to the environment, markets, health and social well-being. New indicators need to be developed to reflect broad-based social protection conditions; promising initiatives to develop real-time monitoring (including crowd sourcing and use of SMS) need to be enhanced and extended; disease surveillance systems need to be linked into climate change monitoring; and a comprehensive data base, including the state of social infrastructure linked to climate conditions, needs to be developed, maintained and applied. Measures are also needed to enhance community and household participation in and benefits from such refined early warning systems.

- Greater recognition is needed for the comparative advantages of **local governments and decentralized structures** in addressing both social protection and climate change, accompanied by measures to empower such structures in planning, implementation, and monitoring of responses. The social protection effects of climate change and variability are often very highly localised. Distinct geographical areas may face different risks and thus require different, time- and location-specific solutions. This makes adaptation measures to climate change very suitable to local government action, as they better know local risks and opportunities. Local planning, municipal by-laws and regulations, management of local expenditure, and local fiscal revenues, raised in the form of taxes, fees and charges are among the key instruments local government can use, to provide incentives or disincentives for the management of climate change issues. Through social initiatives aimed at conserving and maintaining forests, wetlands and other ecosystems, local governments are contributing to reduce 'greenhouse gas' (GHG) emissions and thus foster a low carbon and climate resilient socio-economic development. Fiscal transfers from central to local governments should keep in mind equity issues in such redistributive measures, with priority given to constituencies located in high risk areas. In Niger, where local governments are responsible for the elaboration of Communal Development Plans (*Plans de développement communaux*), a pilot project is strengthening the capacities of local actors for identification of vulnerabilities and targeting processes linked to the food security early warning system. In each participating Commune, a Vulnerability Monitoring Unit (*Observatoire de suivi de la vulnérabilité*) is chaired by the mayor and composed of locally elected authorities, traditional leaders, technical agents and NGO/civil society representatives. Its role is to collect, analyze and disseminate relevant information as well as to propose actions for emergency response. This kind of initiative can be taken to scale and broadened to deal with longer term responses to social protection linked to climate change within Communal Development Plans.⁷
- Appropriate **legal and policy frameworks to support local initiatives** are essential for both social protection and climate resilience. The legal status of particular user groups and producer associations (at local, regional, and national levels) needs to be strengthened to enhance possibilities for collective and cooperative action while issues of land ownership and usage rights need to be clarified in order to pave the way for investment decisions on the part of local communities and individual households. Particular measures are required to take into consideration gender inequalities as well as to ensure the rights of frequently marginalized groups such as pastoralists, fisher folk, indigenous populations, etc. Overall measures to enhance the legal and policy framework would be part of the transformative agenda of social protection outlined above. In Burkina Faso, for example, grass-roots 'Groups for Forest Management' (*Groupements de Gestion Forestière*, GGF) have actively participated in the management of forests and the supply of urban areas in forest products, including wood fuels since the late 1990s. Different GGFs have been entrusted with managerial responsibilities over forest sites (*chantiers d'aménagement forestier*, CAF), through formal management concession contracts (*contrats de concession de gestion*) signed by the forestry administration. Since decentralization reforms of 2007, GGF representatives are members of the 'Village Development Commissions' (*Commissions Villageoises de Développement*, CVD) which have acquired a formal legal status as part of the multi-layered decentralized governance structure (Ouedraogo, 2009).
- **Effective conflict reduction and resolution measures** must be considered as critical instruments for social protection, particularly in light of rising civil insecurity in areas of diminishing or marginal

⁷ "APCAN: Assistance in the Management of the National Prevention System for the Nutrition Crisis of Niger," Project implemented by CARE, See: www.care.org/careswork/projects/NER075.asp

resources and continuing conflicts among and between users of natural resources. Within the context of a land tenure reform in Niger, for example, ‘Tenure Commissions’ (*commissions foncières*) were created at the level of numerous municipal governments. The role of these Commissions is to recognize customary tenure rights at different institutional levels and to transform rural concessions into ownership rights, and use of common property resources (such as grazing lands and forests) as well as to contribute to put in place local mechanisms to prevent, manage and solve land use and land-ownership related conflicts (by delivering land title, for example, assessing the strength of rights claimed by litigants or determine the amount to be paid for eventual indemnity).

- The importance of **identifying and targeting multiple and diverse vulnerabilities** and developing appropriate and differentiated responses is increasingly recognized in both social protection and climate change. Recent literature has begun to focus attention on the differential impacts and effects of climate change on different categories of population such as women (Brody et al, 2008; Terry, 2009; Demiatrades and Esplen, 2010) and children (Bartlett, 2008; Mitchell, and Haynes 2009; Tanner et al, 2009). So too, for social protection, the need for child-sensitivity (DFID et al, 2008; Save the Children, 2008) and gender sensitivity (Thakur et al, 2009; ODI, 2010; Sepulveda, 2010) is by now well established, while the need for particular social protection measures for the elderly is also well recognized (cf Help Age International, 2006). Putting social protection and climate change together means identifying differential risks, vulnerabilities and impacts of climate change for different population categories, and developing appropriate social protection responses.
- **Strategic partnerships and effective coordination** are key to the success of efforts to integrate social protection and climate change policies and programmes within broader overall national poverty reduction and development strategies. This will require enhanced capacity and effective institutions at national and local levels (including grass roots institutions and local governments). Imaginative and consistent efforts are needed to bring together social and environmental actors and their partners to share perspectives, exchange ideas, and embark on joint planning. Forums providing a meeting ground for members of the academic/scientific communities and policy makers and practitioners need to be multiplied to enable both communication and cross-fertilization of new concepts and ideas and reality checks on the ground. Particular efforts are needed to pull together the different specialized intellectual and institutional streams around food security; disaster preparedness; rural and social sector development and the emerging climate group within the broader perspective of transformative social protection (cf, the example of the African Climate Change Resilience Alliance – ACCRA).⁸
- **Appropriate financing is required** for the long term investment needed to build and sustain integrated national social protection systems and climate resilience programmes. Capitalization of existing climatic funds for broad-based social protection is one immediate option; ensuring that existing donor networks around social protection include attention to climate change issues is another. In some African countries, newly created governmental agencies to function as ‘basket funds’ to support investment by local governments (such as in Mali, Rwanda, Niger or Burkina Faso) should include earmarked funds, coupled with concrete incentives, to sustain social protection/climate adaptation measures in selected areas.

⁸ One of the aims of the alliance is “To understand how existing social protection, livelihoods and disaster risk reduction projects by ACCRA members build adaptive capacity to climate change in beneficiaries and how these approaches can be strengthened” (ACCRA 2010).

6. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has argued that holistic, integrated approaches are needed to unleash the positive synergies that can be achieved through social protection fully attuned to environmental and climate-related vulnerabilities and climate resilience efforts that also provide social protection. Strategies that recognize and enhance these synergies at the outset, from initial analysis and policy development through programme planning and implementation and evaluation, would seem to offer the greatest potential for positive impact on vulnerable populations facing a multitude of risks.

That said, instead of awaiting perfect policy integration (which often seems chimerical in the fact of the plethora of competing frameworks, scientific disciplines, institutional interest groups, and bureaucratic structures with often contradictory agendas and priorities vying for prominence), approaches that are incremental and, themselves, 'adaptive' to the particular national policy environment may be the most pragmatic way forward. Such approaches would seek to build on, rather than replace, those elements of existing policies, programmes and structures whose mechanisms can be fine-tuned to respond to the newly identified priorities. In this way, perhaps, climate resilience measures can become increasingly open to social protection responses, and social protection itself can be brought ever more firmly down to earth.

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