FOOD SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Contents

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Executive summary

The objective of this paper is to inform DFID's position paper on social protection about the ways in which food security issues should be taken into account in developing social protection policies, strategies and programmes. Interestingly, the international debates surrounding food security have already covered much of the territory now being explored for social protection: risk, vulnerability, hazards; differences between acute and chronic; behavioural response to risk; recovery and non-recovery processes; state and non-state responses; targeting; etc.

Food security and social protection – general principles

There are various issues in food security that are relevant to social protection and form overarching themes in this paper:

- 'Food security', embracing as it does food availability, access and utilisation, is too large an issue to be addressed effectively by a set of specific policies. Rather, food security needs to be mainstreamed across sectors.
- Access to food is as important as food availability. In many countries there remains an over-focus on food availability at the expense of other components. Some commonly used instruments to ensure immediate food availability can actually have a damaging impact on longer-term access to food by vulnerable people.
- Reducing long-term chronic food insecurity is as important as addressing short-term acute food insecurity. This requires additional instruments, and may require the modification of some designed to address acute food crises.
- Targeting issues are particularly complex for food security in two respects. First, chronic food insecurity requires action directed at those people within a population who are affected *and* at overarching macro and sectoral action. Secondly, many households can meet *some* of their food needs through their own entitlements (production, income, etc.), so instruments must complement not compromise existing entitlements and coping strategies.
- Vulnerability assessments on which to base food security and social protection programming are now much more widely available and should be better utilised both to design instruments and to assess impact.

Acute food crises

Social protection instruments have an important role in addressing acute food crises, but specifics depend critically on the nature of the hazard and must complement people's existing coping strategies. Appropriate SP instruments have a much wider remit than food aid alone, and are likely to include measures to: restore assets that enable households to participate in functioning markets; and protect and strengthen entitlements for those who are destitute or unable to work as well as able-bodied people. Direct cash transfers have advantages in many circumstances. Attention should also be given to ensuring that health and education services continue and can be used by those affected. Vulnerability assessment systems and disaster preparedness are essential underpinnings for effective SP instruments and complementary international humanitarian response. Getting the response wrong to acute crises can undermine longer-term coping and recovery.

Chronic food insecurity

Social protection instruments have important contributions to make to addressing chronic food insecurity through transfers to support entitlements, including cash transfers, school feeding and public works programmes. The relevance of more direct forms of food and input distribution is more limited.

There are important links between social protection and growth. Social protection can be growth-promoting: directly, where it stimulates thrift and credit schemes, creates physical assets through employment schemes, and promotes personal insurance; and indirectly, where investments are enabled through fungible transfer payments and where cash transfers (e.g. social pensions) stimulate consumption. Public works programmes have a particularly relevant contribution to make both to supporting entitlements and improving access to markets and basic services essential for longer-term economic growth, though should have carefully planned infrastructure outputs that result in growth, rather than being public works for public works' sake.

Given these linkages, social protection objectives should be embedded within broader macro-economic and sectoral policies (rather than administered from within a single ministry). This implies harmonisation of policy in support of food security across sectors and regions. At present, this does not always happen in practice. The broad policy environment and service provision must support risk reduction: risk-coping activities alone are not sufficient to address chronic food insecurity.

Targeting lessons

Targeting is about both the technical process of identifying who is vulnerable and the practical/implementation process of delivering SP instruments to such people. In the former, the urgent need is for improved capacity to identify larger causes of vulnerability (above short-term food access) and to track coping strategies over time, which can provide valuable entry points for support. In the latter, evidence is limited but the costs of targeting (either by geographical area, individual/household vulnerability, or community) and problems of exclusion and inclusion errors may outweigh the costs of supplying instruments on a universal scale.

Institutional lessons

Exploring the institutional arrangements through which food security policies are made and implemented demonstrates that the concept of food security is broad and needs to be mainstreamed across sectors. As much as possible should be delivered sectorally, with a minimal role for ministries of welfare in delivering transfers such as pensions and in providing technical advice on mainstreaming. At a regional level, the role of social protection policy is limited to acknowledgement and understanding of the extent to which regional processes, such as trade, may affect national SP instruments. Finally, there is a need to utilise instruments which increase social and political capital as well as natural, financial and physical asset status.

1 Introduction

The objective of this paper is to inform DFID's position paper on social protection about the ways in which experience with supporting food security can benefit the development of social protection policies, strategies and programmes.

Initial experience with social protection came from middle-income countries, where food insecurity might not have been such an issue. What can we learn from our understanding of food security for social protection in situations where food insecurity persists? The international debates surrounding food security have already covered much of the territory now being explored for social protection: risk, vulnerability, hazards; differences between acute and chronic; behavioural response to risk; recovery and non-recovery processes; state and non-state responses; targeting; etc. Many of the instruments now recognised as core social protection instruments were often originally designed to address food insecurity. In many respects, social protection represents a widening of the food security policy discourse, and should learn from it – although there are also some important areas of food security that need to be addressed through separate and additional policies, strategies and processes.

The following points are recurring themes in this paper:

- 'Food security', embracing as it does questions of availability, access and utilisation, is a large issue, too large to be addressed effectively by a single set of specific policies. Rather, food security needs to be mainstreamed across sectors. This immediately raises important institutional questions about coordination, integration, etc.
- Food access is as important as food availability. Although this has been recognised for a long time, in practice there remains in many countries an over-focus on food availability at the expense of other components. Furthermore, some commonly used instruments to ensure immediate food availability can actually have a damaging impact on longer-term access to food by vulnerable people.
- Reducing long-term chronic food insecurity is as important as addressing short-term acute food insecurity (and is more of a problem globally in terms of numbers of people affected). This requires additional instruments, and may require the modification of some designed to address acute food crises.
- Targeting issues are particularly complex for food security in two respects. First, chronic food insecurity requires actions directed both at those people within a population who are affected *and* overarching macro and sectoral action. Secondly, in theory households have the ability to meet some of their food needs through their own entitlements (own production, income, etc.) so instruments should preferably complement and certainly not compromise existing entitlements.
- Reliable vulnerability assessments on which to base food security and social protection programming are essential and should be readily available to social protection systems.

2 What Is food security?

Food security exists when all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (www.fao.org/WAICENT/FAOINFO/ECONOMIC/ESA/fs_en.htm). Thus it involves much more than simple calorific intake and includes important components of quality and reliability and subjective measurements of cultural preference. Institutional structures have an important influence on people's ability to maintain food security during periods of shock.

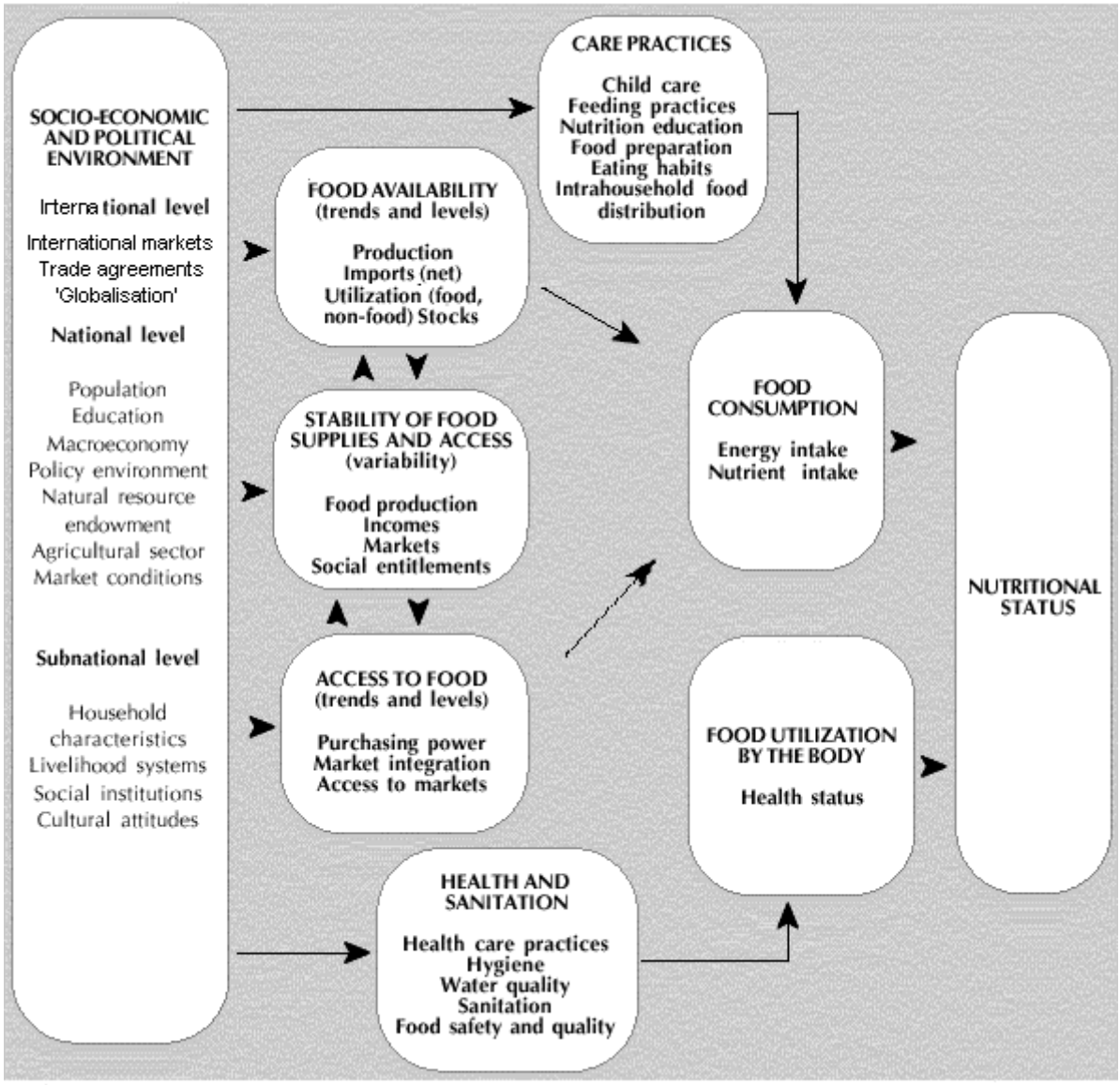
The arguments for the need for food security are well rehearsed: as well as being a basic human right, enshrined in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 'hunger …. is also a basic development issue impeding national economic growth and keeping millions trapped in poverty' (FAO, 2000: p. iv).[2] Over 800 million people worldwide are estimated to be hungry (FAO, 2003). Some estimates suggest poor nutrition costs 5–10% of GDP every year (Gillespie and Haddad, 2004), and it tends to affect women more than men.

Food security is achieved through three essential components: availability, access, and utilisation (preparation and consumption of food and the biological capacity of individuals to absorb and utilise nutrients in the food that they eat). Figure 1 describes the important inter-relationships among the components. Stability is as important as levels: dramatic fluctuations in components (for example, availability or prices) can have significant impacts on overall food security status. As will be described below, the multiple components of food security imply policy action across a number of fronts.

Entitlements to food are very important: 'The mere presence of food in the economy, or in the market, does not entitle a person to consume it' (Dreze and Sen, 1989: 9). People gain entitlements to food by: producing their own food; by exchanging money (that they have earned through labour) for food; or through transfers from kin, community or state. Therefore, public policy instruments to strengthen food security must support these entitlements rather than weaken them, in terms of incentives, relationships and assets. An important distinction between food insecurity and other types of vulnerability is that households can be expected to meet some proportion of their needs from their own entitlements, particularly through production, selling produce and labour, and, to a lesser extent, through social transfers.

The concept of food security can be applied at various levels of aggregation from the global to the individual. This paper focuses on food security at the household level, but national and global trends have an impact, and intra-household factors impact on individuals' food security within the household unit e.g. children, women, etc. The assumption that national food availability guarantees individual access to food is persistent but wrong.

Figure 1 Components of food security

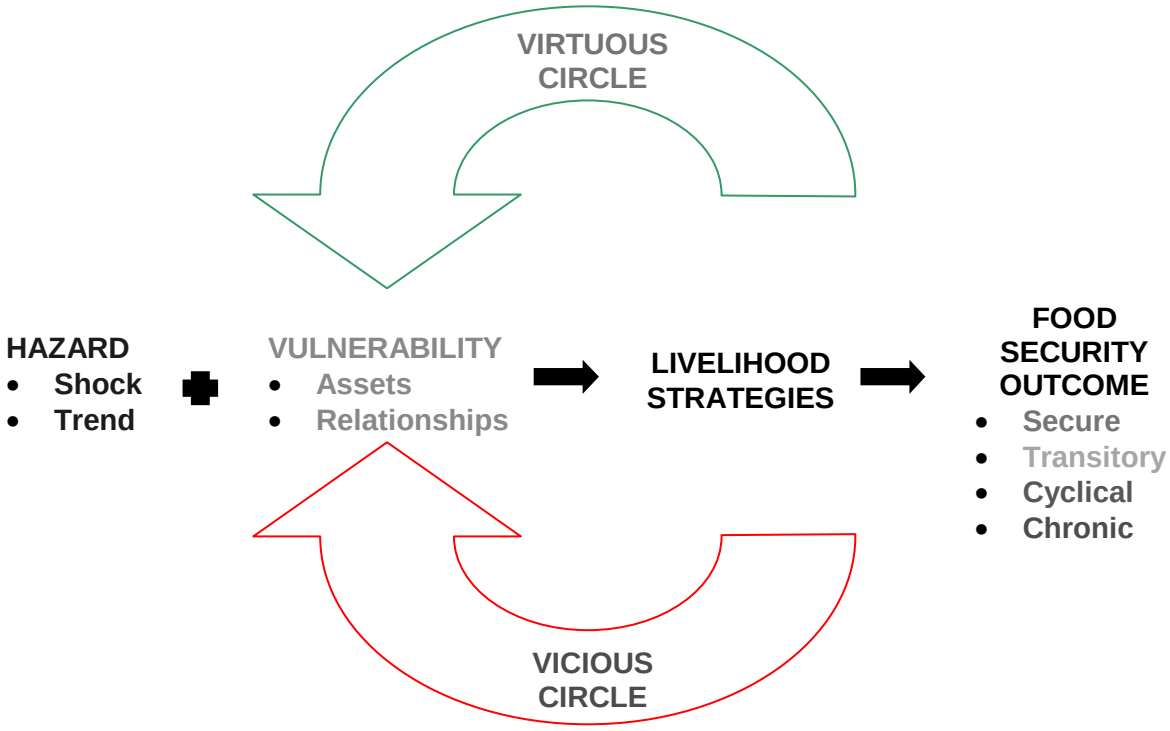


Source: FAO.

Food insecurity can be *chronic* (long term and persistent), *cyclical* (for example, at certain times of the year between planting and harvest), or *transitory* (where a specific shock leads to a food shortage or sudden rise in prices). It is important for policy purposes to distinguish between episodes of acute food insecurity arising from significant co-variant shocks[3] in the context of an otherwise positive development trajectory, and sudden expansions in chronic food insecurity which can arise from less severe co-variant shocks in situations of deteriorating natural, political or economic trends.

The ways in which individuals and households become vulnerable to food insecurity is stylised in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Vulnerability to food insecurity



For most households, food insecurity occurs when they are unable to cope with a particular hazard. However, for the chronically poor, assets and relationships may be so inadequate that they are vulnerable to food insecurity, even in the absence of a significant hazard. Hazards may be natural, political, economic or social/human in nature; they may be unpredictable shocks or longer-term trends. Longer-term trends, such as neo-patrimonialism and market failures, can be as damaging for food security as sudden-onset natural disasters or human conflict. Idiosyncratic risks, such as old age, childhood and motherhood, can represent a significant threat to food security as do co-variant risks.

Inability to cope, or 'vulnerability', is conventionally related to assets, particularly physical assets such as land, labour and capital. A growing body of literature on poverty and vulnerability[4] is referring to the influence of what might be termed political capital, i.e. households' relationships with social and political institutions at state, market and community level, and thus their degree of social inclusion or exclusion. This is particularly important for food security, given the critical role of exchange entitlements (see above) in securing access to food.

In broad terms, the negative influence of vulnerability on households' strategic decisions is increasingly recognised:[5] persistent vulnerability can produce extreme risk aversity (manifested in, for example, high levels of livelihood diversification) and extreme levels of asset reduction. These may minimise vulnerability over the short term but jeopardise investment in assets for the longer term. In relation to food security, livelihood strategies, in combination with livelihood outcomes themselves (i.e. in terms of poverty reduction and food security), can thus set up *virtuous or vicious circles* of asset accumulation and social integration, which have a critical impact on households' ability to reduce, mitigate or cope with hazards threatening food security.

3 Progress towards food security and policy options

A commitment to reducing hunger worldwide is enshrined in the first Millennium Development Goal,[6] which has the specific target of halving between 1990 and 2015 the proportion of people who suffer from hunger, measured in terms of both undernourished people as a percentage of the population, and under-5's underweight for age.[7]

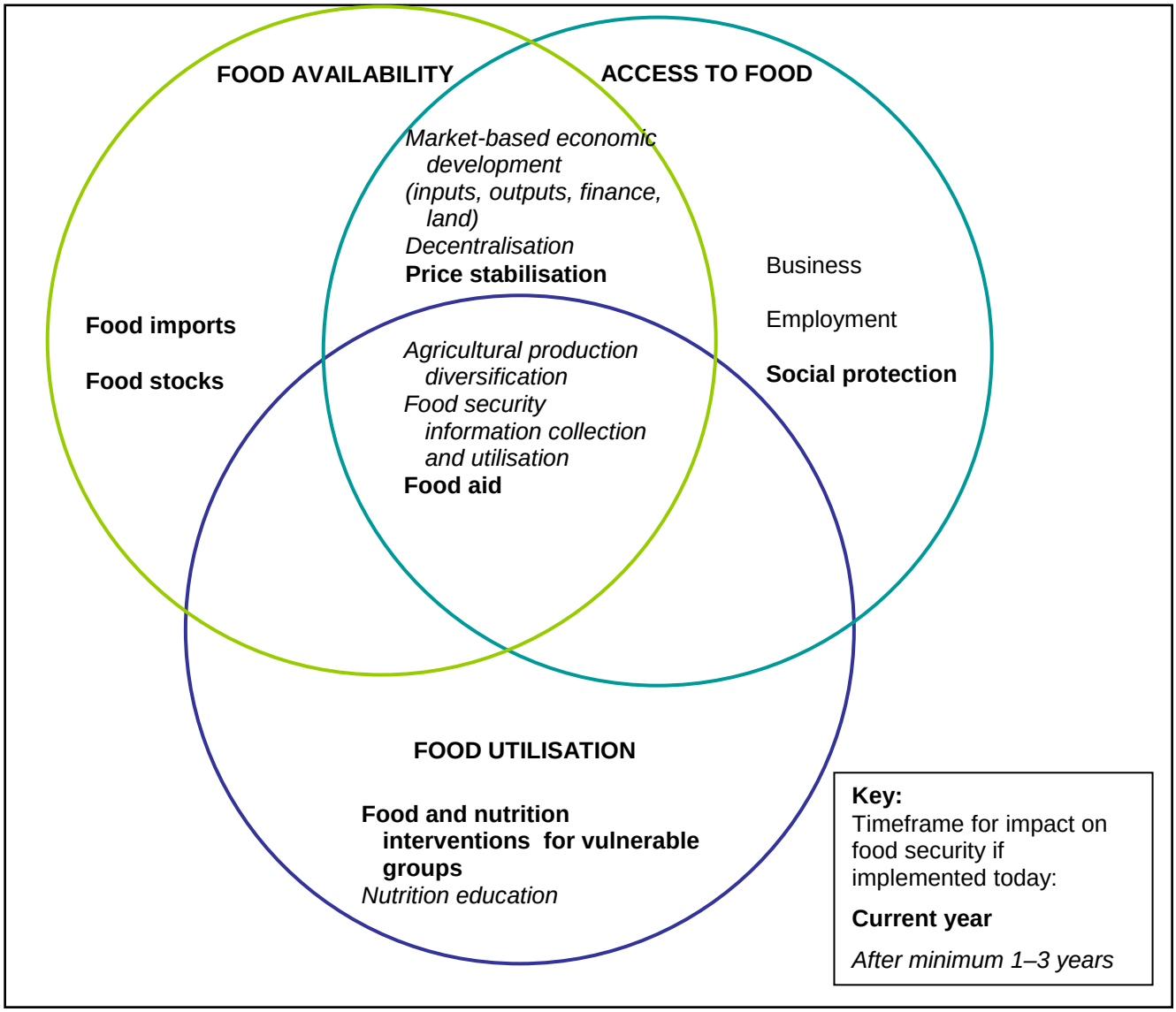
The MDG1 under-5's indicator is a compound measure of wasting, indicative of *acute* food insecurity (under-5's weight for height), and stunting, indicative of *chronic* food insecurity (under-5's height for age). The extent and impact of *cyclical* food insecurity can be profound but is much more difficult to measure, other than by detailed local-level surveys. The same applies for the contribution of qualitative aspects of food insecurity (inappropriate diet, wrongly prepared, etc.). *Transitory* food insecurity can be measured by increases in Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM), the standard indicator used to identify food 'crisis'. In short, the measurement of hunger is contested, and there are important differences among regions in acceptable levels of stunting and wasting; in the relative importance of availability, access and utilisation problems; and in the stability of food supply and access (for more on this, see Smith, 1998).

Progress towards MDG1 is geographically uneven, with little or backward progress being made in Africa and some significant achievements in Asia, as well as reversals in other countries (see Annex Table 1). In nearly half the sub-regions of the world, more than 20% of the population is undernourished (i.e. more than moderate undernourishment), and altogether, the total number of undernourished people has increased by over 18 million since 1995–97 (FAO, 2003).

Figure 3 illustrates how food security is likely to be achieved only through a *combination* of production, market, and consumption-based interventions: a long-term commitment to social protection for those who are unable to feed themselves and more productive agriculture for subsistence and more efficiently functioning markets. As Annex Table 3 shows, the more successful food security strategies in individual countries have an overarching objective of strengthening exchange entitlements through access to markets, income and transfers. Thus, whilst the balance may vary, they prioritise both social protection and economic growth, rather than just one or the other or food availability. However, the international community tends to focus on responding to acute food crises (reflected in the specific measurements and data used to monitor the MDGs) which, as will be discussed below, can conflict with effectively addressing high levels of chronic food insecurity to improve quality of life and future human capital formation.

The remainder of this paper examines the main approaches to and experiences with strengthening food security in different contexts to date, and the implications for social protection policies and programmes. Specific instruments are listed in Annex Table 2 and experiences with these are discussed in detail in subsequent sections.

Figure 3 Policies affecting food security



Source: FFSSA (2004).

4 Sudden-onset food crises

Acute sudden-onset food crises are indicated by a natural, political or economic shock which normally presents co-variant risk to the entire population in the affected area (earthquake zone, war zone, nation state, etc.). Everyone is affected, although those with limited assets and/or relationships will be worse affected, as will those who are additionally facing idiosyncratic risks (e.g. mothers, young children, the aged, etc.). Depending on the nature of the hazard, there may be those more vulnerable to its impact owing to the nature of their livelihood strategy (e.g. farming-dependent families in drought zones, petty traders after sudden changes in border regulations).

A long-established institutional framework exists for international humanitarian response to episodes of food (and other) crises. However, the conceptual framework used to identify and respond to food crises has not kept pace with developments in international thinking around food security. In particular, there is inadequate distinction between different types of food insecurity (transitory, cyclical and chronic) and a tendency to underestimate the contribution of access and utilisation problems.

Accordingly, international humanitarian instruments are weighted towards addressing immediate food availability, the most commonly used instrument being internationally procured food aid. This has a role in alleviating transitory food insecurity arising from sudden-onset natural and political shocks, particularly those that can be expected to end with a return to more-or-less the previous normality, e.g. after some kinds of natural disaster and civil conflict. Availability is the problem and thus the solution.

However, social protection instruments can make important contributions to protecting food consumption and protecting assets to basic services in various ways, which have minimal negative and ideally some positive impact on long-term income potential in affected areas.

SP instruments must be selected to complement existing coping strategies in an affected area and so will be context specific. This highlights the critical need for on-going *vulnerability assessment systems* together with *early warning systems* to form part of the basic social protection infrastructure. Optimal information for decision-making is recognised as something of a holy grail, but there have been valuable lessons learnt from recent humanitarian operations.[8] Current techniques allow reliable information to be consistently generated against key 'outcome' and risk indicators: this is important in gauging impact of interventions as much as informing their design.

Natural and political shocks may well affect immediate food availability, and thus SP instruments to cope with this will be appropriate. But SP instruments to protect food access and food utilisation may also be appropriate. Economic shocks are rather different, with SP instruments intended to create change in the economic context in which people access food. Much can be achieved through phasing and sequencing of macroeconomic policy to reduce this kind of shock. SP instruments will need to focus on protecting food consumption (economic shocks not usually directly impacting on food availability) during the period of the shock, in ways which do not deflect households from their existing economic activities. Social shocks need to be addressed through a combination of transfers to protect entitlements and access to basic services, particularly health.

In the early phases of natural and political shocks, *food aid* is likely to be appropriate (and is often the easiest to source and manage), but also measures to restore assets which complement access to assets through existing market systems (for example, *seed vouchers and fairs* rather than seeds and tools, Cromwell *et al.*, 1996). In later phases of natural and political shocks and in response to economic shocks, measures to protect and

strengthen entitlements are appropriate. *Cash for work* programmes are appropriate for able-bodied target beneficiaries, particularly where market and social infrastructure has been damaged: cash does not prejudge the form of entitlement most in need of support, as direct provision of food or inputs does. In some circumstances, cash for work is seen as preferable to cash transfers, because it is more likely to be self-targeting and does not create a disincentive to work (Low *et al.*, 1999). Cash for work must be complemented with *direct feeding* for the non-able-bodied: as well as take home rations and home-based care, *school feeding* may be relevant in supporting investments in human capital (although, beyond ensuring higher attendance in schools, the evidence on school feeding is equivocal – see Bennett, 2003).

Protecting basic health and education services is critical throughout, both for reducing vulnerability (a good health environment and women's education have been estimated to be majority determinants of reduction in child malnutrition (Runge *et al.*, 2003)) and for coping with risk. Expenditure switching is now known to have been a major coping strategy during the 1991–92 food crisis in Southern Africa, with expenditure on heath and education being reduced to protect expenditure on food (Eldridge, 2003). Some other common coping strategies (e.g. prostitution, gold panning) are directly injurious to health. Thus, *suspending basic health and education fees* for the duration of the crisis could protect access to these services,[9], and *targeting* specific groups, for example PLWA, prostitutes, with *relevant health services* could help to protect against negative impacts of coping strategies.

Therefore, social protection systems can contribute significantly to mitigating the risks of acute food crises and coping with them. Vulnerability assessment and early warning must be essential parts of social protection systems, in order to predict upcoming crises and to respond appropriately to the specific context*. Disaster preparedness* is also critical, so that where the scale of response required is beyond the capacity of existing social protection budgets and delivery systems, international humanitarian response can contribute appropriately, building on its comparative advantage in rapid response. As part of disaster preparedness, investment in appropriate infrastructure could reduce some future risks of sudden onset food crisis, for example, construction of flood defences and promotion of drought tolerant crops. Investment in social and political capital is important for reducing future vulnerability to sudden onset food crises.

To date, international humanitarian response and longer-term social protection systems have not been well integrated. The danger of this is that sudden-onset food crises are misdiagnosed and responses are inappropriate. Experience with the recent food crisis in Southern Africa, summarised in Box 1, provides evidence of this.

In conclusion, social protection instruments have an important role in addressing acute food crises, but specifics depend critically on the nature of the hazard and must complement people's existing coping strategies. Appropriate SP instruments are much wider than food aid alone, and are likely to include phased sequences of measures to: restore assets that complement existing market systems; protect and strengthen entitlements for non-able-bodied as well as able-bodied people; and protect access to relevant health and education services. Vulnerability assessment systems and disaster preparedness are essential underpinnings for effective SP instruments and complementary international humanitarian response. There are significant dangers from misdiagnosis and inappropriate response in terms of providing effective coping, mitigation and risk reduction in relation to acute food crises.

Box 1: Poor coordination of international humanitarian response and social protection

Early warning systems in Southern Africa have suffered in recent years from being run-down in capacity, resources and coordination. At the start of the 2001–03 crisis, most relied on crop estimates, which monitor food availability but not food access. When anecdotal evidence of localised suffering first emerged in mid 2001, it was not possible to construct an accurate big picture of regional vulnerability. By mid 2002, in response to increasing local and international concern, the international humanitarian system organised its own needs assessment, which scaled up from relatively small sample surveys and underestimated the contribution of people's own coping strategies. The resulting UN consolidated appeal in mid 2002 probably overestimated the size of acute food insecurity but underestimated the proportion of the population in Southern Africa that was chronically food insecure. At US$611 million, the appeal was large, but mainly focused on internationally procured food aid.[10] This kind of food aid suffers from the disadvantage of what can be described as 'stiff tap syndrome': it is slow to turn on (by January 2003, food aid had provided only 5% of domestic cereals needs in the countries covered by the appeal) but slow to turn off (in April 2004, food aid was still being distributed in a number of provinces in Zambia, despite bumper harvest predictions). It is also expensive (US$450/tonne in Southern Africa in 2001–03 versus US$220 for commercial imports, for example), in many forms addresses only food availability, and can damage long-term food access through market mechanisms (for example, damping down commercial imports). After the event, evidence suggested that locally procured food (if not available from national strategic grain reserves, then obtained through announcing clear import requirements and relaxing import controls) could have made a cheaper, more timely, and less damaging contribution. In any case, food aid addresses short-term coping but does little to address, and may damage, longer-term risk reduction and mitigation which requires context-specific SP instruments. Particularly in situations characterised by sudden expansions of chronic food insecurity, rather than acute food crises precipitated by short-term shocks, underlying trends will continue with long-term impacts on risk and vulnerability. In Southern Africa, recent estimates suggest some eight million people are chronically food insecure every year, and a further eight million at risk of transitory food insecurity.

Source: FFSSA (2004).

Table 1 summarises some of the key differences in the diagnosis of and appropriate response to sudden-onset acute food crises and slow-onset chronic food crises, which latter is the subject of the next section.

Table 1 Different instruments for acute and chronic food crises

	Acute food crises	**Chronic food crises**
Indicators	GAMs, market prices, coping strategies	U-5's underweight, market prices, coping strategies
Causes	Sudden-onset shock Universal impact within affected area	Slow-onset trend Different impact on households that are chronic, cyclical and transitory food insecure
Appropriate instruments	Food aid rations	Food aid + supplementary feeding for the most insecure
	Supplementary feeding in schools + clinics	
	SGR releases into food aid pool	SGR releases into market + relaxation of import controls
	Suspension education + health fees	Suspension education + health fees for most households
	Restoration of capital assets e.g. land reclamation, seeds, tools, houses + other infrastructure	Building assets for most households, e.g. conservation farming, seeds, fertiliser, seasonal credit
		Economic coordination through macro and sector policies
		Building social and political capital
Other	Traditional relief systems may function	Traditional safety nets may have broken down
Target group	Vulnerable households affected by shock	Vulnerable households affected by trend, and others
Timescale	Limited duration, until impact of shock alleviated	Variable by instrument, but many long duration to address trend

5 Chronic food insecurity

Chronic food insecurity occurs when natural, political or economic trends present some kind of co-variant risk to the entire population in an affected area (farming system, region, nation state, etc.). Everyone faces the hazard, but those with limited assets, including social and political capital, will be worse affected, as will those who are additionally facing idiosyncratic risks (e.g. mothers, young children, the aged, etc.). These groups may be food-insecure year in, year out, whereas other groups may experience food insecurity for only part of the year, when food is particularly short or expensive, or only in certain years, when combinations of hazards are more severe than usual or coping strategies more constrained. Depending on the nature of a hazard, there may be those more vulnerable to its impact owing to the nature of their livelihood strategy (e.g. farming-dependent families to soil degradation, petty traders to market failures).

Increasingly, the greater proportion of food insecurity arises not from sudden-onset shocks to an otherwise positive development trajectory, but rather from longer-term negative trends across the natural, political, economic and social spectrum. These trends, in tandem with existing levels of vulnerability, create the vicious downward circle illustrated in Figure 2, where increasing proportions of a given population suffer from chronic, cyclical and transitory food insecurity.

Addressing chronic food insecurity has more to do with improving access and utilisation to food by reducing and mitigating risk over the longer term, than it does with large short-term injections of food aid. Thus, policies to address chronic food insecurity must embrace both economic growth (raising incomes) as well as social protection (reducing the variance of incomes (and thus vulnerability), protecting the consumption of the chronically poor, and providing access to basic services). Policies must take account of existing coping and livelihood strategies, particularly those they may affect, such as access to markets, to diversified sources of income, or to community transfers.

5.1 Role of social protection

Safety nets form one part of the broad range of social protection instruments. They can be appropriate in providing short-term support to the transitory food insecure, or to the chronically food insecure who are unable to work. It is important, though, to acknowledge that safety nets can do more harm than good (see, for example, the emergency response in Southern Africa in 2002–03 to a misdiagnosed crisis that was chronic rather than acute (FFSSA, 2004)).

To overcome these limitations, social protection instruments must embrace all aspects of entitlement: production, exchange, and employment as well as transfers. A move away from an agriculture-led response to reducing rural people's food insecurity, towards supporting improved conditions from employment and petty trade in urban areas has been cogently argued on the basis of field-based evidence from Africa and multi-country studies (Bush, 2003). This evidence indicates that the majority of the rural poor's annual food 'income' comes from (migrant) wage labour and petty commerce, not crop production. The argument here is that families are not necessarily rural or urban but have members that move between the two and economic interests that straddle the spatial divide. Thus, policies that promote linkages between rural and urban economies are necessary for promoting food access in rural areas. This is in contrast with the earlier emphasis on finding ways to increase the skill (and value) of rural labour, and to provide social protection in ways that complement seasonal employment off-farm, with the overall goal of avoiding displacement of food-insecure rural households into urban shanty towns.

In the context of the global HIV/AIDS epidemic, with more than 30% of the adult population infected in some countries and the epidemic by no means past its peak (UNAIDS, 2002), it will be important for SP programmes to identify extra needs and new instruments in response to long-term illness, labour shortages, etc.

Bush (2003) goes on to argue that it is middle-income households who are heavily reliant on subsistence agriculture. They lack the diversified income and asset base of better-off households by which to accumulate savings as a key buffer in times of economic stress. Middle-income households tend to lose much of their food 'income' when crops fail. To cope with multi-season harvest shortfalls, they tend to dispose of assets critical for long-term food security, creating the kind of vicious circle illustrated in Figure 1. Over time, this diminishes their resilience to hazards and – in the case of co-variant risks such as droughts or devaluations – increases levels of impoverishment in the region.

Various SP instruments can provide appropriate transfers to support entitlements, including *cash transfers, school feeding and public works programmes*. Some, for example food aid, which addresses food availability alone, are only appropriate for dealing with transitory food insecurity. Other transfers are more appropriate for the chronically food insecure. Those who can work benefit from *cash for work programmes* that strengthen entitlements through employment, whilst the elderly and infirm are best supported through *cash transfers*. Because they have greater fungibility than food aid and they do not require a matching commitment of household resources such as labour (unlike food or cash for work), cash transfers have the potential to act as a springboard towards strengthening livelihoods over the longer term and not merely as an immediate safety net.

Other instruments for providing transfers are more problematic. The benefits of *input distribution* – either as handouts or in payment for public works – may be overestimated in rural areas, because entitlements from own production often form a small proportion of the total. In Malawi, when rural families were offered a choice of packs of free inputs or vouchers exchangeable for goods at local rural centres, 70% of respondents chose the latter (and most chose consumer durables and investment goods) (Harnett and Cromwell, 2000).

Fair price shops are only suitable for those with an existing entitlement. *Food stamps* in order to generate entitlements are difficult to implement in remote areas or where there are supply-side problems. Broad-spectrum *consumer price subsidies* (often operated in conjunction with releases from national strategic grain reserves in order to limit fiscal exposure) are prone to significant inclusion errors and management problems.

Some instruments can contribute to building assets to mitigate and reduce risk, at household, local or national level. Households' response to repeated co-variant risks can set up a vicious circle of low investment, out of which it is difficult to achieve economic growth. SP instruments have an important role to play in protecting entitlements and building physical and social capital. *Public works schemes* are a good example of this – well designed schemes can provide vocational training and skills to individuals whilst contributing to market and social infrastructure through, for example, the construction or maintenance of roads, schools, etc. These instruments can be particularly helpful in contributing not only to protecting entitlements for participants but also to improving access to markets and basic services essential for longer-term economic growth. Cash transfers, as described above, also have the potential to act as a springboard towards strengthening livelihoods over the longer term and not merely as an immediate safety net. However, drawing on evidence from India, Dev *et al.* (2004) show that schemes that are designed without ensuring that there is a market for the skills or infrastructure outputs are likely to create unproductive assets and fail to provide a springboard to increased food security.

Participation and timing are also important in public works: the least able can be excluded or may participate at the expense of working in their own fields and making investments in food security for the coming season.

Given that people are vulnerable to many different kinds of risk, it is difficult, if not impossible, to find a single intervention that is appropriate for enabling all people to deal with risk. Appropriate instruments vary according to geographical location and livelihood systems. In very remote rural areas, it may be more important to support increased agricultural production for more stable subsistence, one instrument for which is *producer price subsidies*. In urban areas, the best priority may be to stabilise consumer prices. Thus, there can be policy trade-offs between people who are vulnerable to different risks.

In different countries, various combinations of instruments are drawn upon (see Annex Table 3). India, for example, relies on a combination of the public distribution system (PDS), nutrition programmes, emergency food distribution and a constitutional right to food. Bangladesh relies on strategic grain reserves and containing prices, as well as dissemination of green revolution agricultural technologies and the VGD programme. Certain combinations of appropriately sequenced activities can help people to graduate from coping activities towards mitigation and reduction activities. But evidence is limited and we need to know much more about types of combinations, sequences and timing, and lessons available from existing examples, such as Vulnerable Group Development in Bangladesh (see Box 2).

Box 2: Vulnerable Group Development in rural Bangladesh

Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) is a national targeted food aid programme implemented by WFP and local government, aimed at the poorest and most disadvantaged women in rural Bangladesh. Every beneficiary is on the programme for 18 months and receives 30kg of wheat (or a combination of wheat and rice) each month, plus some cash savings (deposits are made in a bank), and beneficiaries access this at the end of the programme. Beneficiaries learn skills, and also sometimes sell the wheat, the income from which is then used for purposes such as purchasing rice, opening a bank account, paying loans, buying chicks, etc. (del Ninno, 2001).

VGD Bangladesh, however, has a rather limited impact on poverty alleviation because of the small size of its programme. For example, in the year 2000, the government distributed 85,000 VGD cards, i.e., 1.25 cards in each village. In addition, it was found that extremely poor people living in environmentally vulnerable areas rarely have access to this card (Datta and Hossain, 2003). Younger women are also more likely to get more out of the training, whereas older women may be in more need of food assistance (del Ninno, 2001). There is evidence of leakage problems, as some women shared the transfer with other women, and rice is preferred to wheat, but beneficiaries do not have a choice in the food they receive. There is also a lack of employment and economic opportunities after training.

Source: Farrington *et al.* (2004a: 35).

Finally, there are certain instruments that explicitly address cyclical food insecurity. These tend to include mainly mitigation activities, and the buffer stock option provided by *national grain reserves*. Although these latter have notorious management problems, they are in most contexts a more realistic option than government participation in grain *futures markets*, which requires a high degree of financial acumen and depends on often limited logistical capacity to move grain rapidly to required locations.[11] Commercial imports by the private sector can, however, make an important contribution to food availability and alleviating pressure on prices, so it is important that any state instruments put in place do not dampen private sector incentives to import, as happened in the 2001–03 crisis in Southern Africa, for example[12].

In more developed economies, instruments can include *weather insurance*. In the context of social protection, it is also useful to think about longer cycles of vulnerability, including life cycles, and the instruments (for example *social pensions*) which might be appropriate for dealing with difference kinds of vulnerability through the life cycle.

The need for strong links between SP programming and effective *early warning systems* and *disaster preparedness* is increasingly recognised. The use of vulnerability assessments based on the Household Food Economy approach have brought about recognition of the need for much more refined vulnerability indicators that capture the *range* of hazards and vulnerabilities prevailing at individual, household or community level, and existing livelihood strategies. Vulnerability assessment systems should be used for all aspects of pro-poor programming, rather than being specific to the food security sector or to emergency response. As regards food security, they need to contain sufficient detail to be able to identify appropriate SP instruments for priority zones and groups.

5.2 Macro and sectoral policies

The key requirement for food security through pro-poor growth is to enable vulnerable people to participate in economic activities that enable them to increase and stabilise their long-term entitlement to food through own production, sales, and income from employment. Primarily, this is through macroeconomic and sectoral instruments that build assets and increase access to markets, in order to reduce or mitigate vulnerability to food insecurity, although it is also important to protect against major risks.

Sound and stable macroeconomic conditions – however difficult to achieve – are a basic prerequisite for getting out of the vicious circle identified in Figure 2, by generating market opportunities, access to assets, reasonable returns to assets, and acceptable risks. These include:

- low and stable interest rates, low inflation, stable and realistic exchange rates;
- good business infrastructure;
- clear and enforceable property rights and contracts.

Greater investment in *economic coordination activities* by a wider range of stakeholders is also needed in order to overcome a range of risks: production risk, price risk, economic coordination risks, and risks of opportunism. Macroeconomic and sectoral policies need to pay much greater attention to non-market coordination to address market failures: globally, there are few, if any, significant success stories without some form of government coordination and risk-bearing investment for market development (which is critical for both food availability and access to food). This is separate from direct producer and consumer subsidisation and relates instead to government's role as provider of regulatory framework and public goods.

One of the major challenges is to develop new models for government to provide an enabling environment for investment by a range of actors (not a return to parastatals, nor a continuation of current models of liberalisation, which have failed to address key economic coordination problems in rural areas). This is needed in research and extension, input supply, credit, and output markets, and is likely to be through *new* transparent institutional arrangements involving rural people, farmer organisations, private businesses, NGOs and donors. Government also needs to ensure there are stable and robust institutions in the economy that can reduce potential investors' vulnerability to opportunism by other actors in the supply chain and by the state and politically powerful rent seekers.

There is no blueprint for what will work: suitable approaches vary at different levels and in relation to different actors. Some examples of recent success stories for tackling economic coordination problems include: programmes to link rural retail enterprises with appropriate wholesalers; universal free inputs programmes; farmers' organisations; and credit recovery mechanisms that do not tie production activities into high-cost marketing structures.

Examples of interventions to reduce risks of opportunism include, at the micro level: adoption of recognised grades and standards in input and output markets; and promulgation of good practice in awarding of licences and contracts. At the macro level, they include: publicising official food import plans in advance; and creating independent strategic grain reserves.

Scaling up coordination will require broader improvements in governance and accountability and institutional efficiency. There is an important need for direct involvement by farmers' associations at local level and policy pressure at national level to build social and political capital.

Maintaining investments in *education and health services* is also vital for both longer-term access to food and longer-term food utilisation (although we would add that these are not sufficient on their own, without changes to improve availability and access to food). Amongst the most cost-effective options for reducing the negative impact of sickness on household food security are preventative health programmes, including school-based health services, immunisations, and access to safe drinking water (Runge *et al.*, 2003). Programmes to combat HIV/AIDS are also imperative in Africa and increasingly in Asia, although there are problems with delivery because many people do not know their HIV status and are remote from health services.

In situations of chronic food insecurity, social protection instruments have important contributions to make through transfers to support entitlements, including cash transfers, school feeding and public works programmes. The relevance of more direct forms of food and input distribution is limited because, in most situations of chronic food insecurity, it is effective economic access to food and inputs that is the binding constraint, rather than physical availability of these items. It is difficult to deliver locally appropriate food and inputs through the international humanitarian system; in any case, the disincentive effect of this on local market functioning – which delivers a greater proportion of total needs in practice – can be significant.[13] Cash transfers, on the other hand, support participation in local food markets.

Whilst a narrower view of social protection (see Box 2 and Box 3, Shepherd 2004) may appear disconnected from the pro-poor growth arguments that are rehearsed above, there are in fact important links between social protection and growth (Devereux, 2003: 1). Social protection can be growth-promoting: directly, where it stimulates thrift and credit schemes, creates physical assets through employment schemes, and promotes personal insurance; and indirectly, where investments are enabled through fungible transfer payments and where cash transfers (e.g. social pensions) stimulate consumption (Farrington *et al.*, 2004a, 2004b). Public works programmes have a particularly relevant contribution to make both to supporting entitlements and to improving access to markets and basic services essential for longer-term economic growth.

Given these linkages, social protection objectives should, therefore, be embedded within broader macroeconomic and sectoral policies. Examples include agricultural policies promoting technologies such as drought-tolerant varieties that provide lower but more stable yields; and instruments that promote income diversification up and downstream from agriculture. This implies harmonisation of policy in support of food security across sectors and regions. At present, this does not always happen in practice: for example, a ministry of agriculture may promote high potential yield varieties, whereas lower potential yield but more stable varieties may be more appropriate for long-term food security.

Whilst a narrow approach to social protection (encompassing social security and safety nets) might be appropriately administered from within a single ministry, if a broader view of

social protection is adopted, then elements of social protection should be mainstreamed into sectoral ministries. Macroeconomic and sectoral approaches have a critical contribution to make to building assets and market access. The broad policy environment and service provision must support risk reduction: risk-coping activities alone are not sufficient to address chronic food insecurity.

6 Targeting

The broad term 'targeting' actually refers to two distinct but related processes: the technical aspects of identifying who is food insecure (or, in the case of social protection, who is vulnerable to a broader range of negative livelihood outcomes, including low income, social exclusion, etc); and implementation – i.e. delivering interventions to food insecure people.

6.1 Identification issues

Better responses to food insecurity require improvements in technical capacity to identify those who are food insecure. Current early warning system assessments tend to have a narrow focus on short-term food access at the expense of exploring larger causes of vulnerability at the national and regional level (Ellis, 2003). At present, internationally agreed criteria for defining the onset of a 'crisis' focus on increased GAMs, rising prices, and distress sales of assets such as livestock, such as occur in episodes of sudden-onset acute food insecurity. However, these are inadequate to identify the start of slower-onset episodes of expanded food insecurity, as was the case in Southern Africa in 2001–03, for example. Early warning and monitoring systems must include livelihood systems, and coping strategies within each, in order to recognise distress behaviour when it starts happening.

In Southern Africa, some progress has been made through Vulnerability Assessment Committees (VAC) in various countries. Tracking coping strategies rather than measuring indicators of vulnerability is critical to the Household Food Economy analytical framework (see www.foodeconomy.com), and increasingly forms the basis of food needs assessment methods employed in Southern Africa. This has the advantage of highlighting the *range* of coping strategies employed by vulnerable households, in which maintaining own-account agricultural production is only one, and thus indicating a wider range of potential entry points for decreasing vulnerability by making these coping strategies more robust and less damaging to long-term livelihoods.

Improving the link between vulnerability assessment systems, disaster preparedness and social protection programming is essential. In broader SP contexts, there is scope within PRSPs to improve poverty and vulnerability monitoring systems.

6.2 Delivery issues

In principle, the targeting of people who are particularly vulnerable to risk should be the most cost-effective and equitable way of delivering social protection instruments. For example, evidence from 30 social protection programmes in Latin America suggests targeted programmes are more likely to benefit the genuinely poor, compared with untargeted programmes, such as provision of basic services (Grosh, 1994).

However, very narrow targeting may be administratively and politically expensive. First, many transfers are subject to elite capture overtly or covertly (for example, incidents in Zambia have been observed where headmen call back general food distributions handed out to nominated families on village lists once international observers have departed, and redistribute the food according to their own priorities (Scott and Mufwambi, 2004)). Secondly, food insecurity (and vulnerability) is difficult to track because it changes over time, sometimes quite rapidly. Thirdly, it is difficult to target accurately (whether by geography, individual status or self-targeting) (for more on this, see for example Levy and

Barahona, 2002). Finally, if not universal, targeting of transfers can become political (this is the case everywhere, but a current pertinent example is Zimbabwe).

Community targeting is often cited as a theoretically cheaper means of targeting. It needs to be transparent, equitable, and flexible to allow for different conditions (Gill *et al.*, 2003), but this is difficult to achieve in practice. Communities are not socially, economically and politically undifferentiated; traditional community relationships may not prioritise individual need over politics. In one of the few direct comparisons of universal distribution and community targeting (in this case of agricultural inputs), evidence from Malawi shows that errors and costs of exclusion through community targeting tend to be greater than inclusion errors and costs of universal distribution (Levy, 2003). Similarly, in Indonesia, for example, in the *Operasi Pasar Khusus* (OPK) targeted food subsidy scheme, questions have been raised about the extent to which village officials have and should follow targeting guidelines. Community targeting can also be difficult where a high proportion of people are considered poor and the community response to categorising people is that 'we are all poor' (Conning and Kevane, 2002; Levy 2003).

Self-targeting can help to reduce elite capture by community leaders and their families, but it can also reinforce the stigma faced by the poorest and socially excluded households if achieved through paying lower than normal wages, or offering inferior foods, such as yellow maize or broken rice.[14]

Thus, taking into account these practical problems, the most appropriate interventions on balance may be those that: benefit the whole community, thereby reducing exclusion errors; build upon, rather than undermine, traditional community mechanisms, which may be a significant source of help for some vulnerable households (although also dependent on existing power structures which may over the longer-term reinforce vulnerable households' lack of voice and social exclusion); and meet the specific needs of different vulnerable groups (e.g. PLWA versus others).

7 Institutional issues

Comparative advantages of different types of institutions in delivering various SP instruments and the desirable roles of NGOs, CBOs and private sector are covered in other thematic contributions to DFID's social protection paper, and so will not be discussed here in depth. Here, we focus on institutional lessons arising from consideration of food security instruments in particular.

7.1 Interdepartmental coordination

We have argued that 'food security' is too large an issue to be addressed effectively by a single set of specific policies. Rather, food security needs to be mainstreamed across sectors. It makes sense to have an overarching national food security strategy (or, by analogy, a social protection strategy), but implementation should be well integrated at departmental level, otherwise it may be ignored or face coordination problems. One example is Vietnam in the 1990s, where attempts to implement special target programmes, including the Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction (HEPR) programme, were restricted in their success in coordinating hunger eradication. Shanks *et al.* (2004) argue that, whilst the 'official rationale for such an approach is to concentrate resources, provide clear and target-oriented definitions of roles and responsibilities, and facilitate coordination between different parts of Government', in fact, the 'weak coordination, management, supervision and monitoring of the multi-sector national target programs is a recognised cause for concern' (p. 11). Specific examples of good integration include promoting diversified production of a range of crops tolerant of climatic variability, rather than monocropping of a limited number of high potential yield hybrids in ministry of agriculture research and extension policies; and organising cash or inputs for work rather than for internationally procured food aid alone in public works programmes operated by disaster management authorities. This line of argument implies that in operational terms ministries of social welfare are left with only the rump of transfers, such as pensions, that cannot be administered through other institutions, although SP specialists may well be required to provide technical guidance to other departments concerning effective mechanisms for delivery of SP objectives.

7.2 Regional dimensions

There is a strong *a priori* case for institutional coordination of food security at regional level, because it is heavily dependent on transboundary import and export of food. The important contribution to national food security made by formal and informal flows of food across borders is often underestimated by policy-makers and international agencies operating at individual country level. This is much less the case for other social protection objectives, where the major issues arise from institutions and processes operating at national, provincial or local level. However, options for social protection are affected by regional food security strategies, particularly policies relating to trade. For example, the subsidised inputs programme in Lesotho was one of the main responses to the humanitarian crisis in 2002–03. Other criticisms aside, because of the porous nature of South African/Lesotho border, a large proportion of the inputs found their way across the border to South Africa (van den Boogaard *et al.*, 2004): given that onward sales of free inputs are usually heavily discounted, this represents a substantial waste of resources intended to ameliorate vulnerability. The role of social protection policy at regional level is perhaps limited to exploring the extent to which regional processes are likely to affect national SP instruments.

7.3 Instruments for building social and political capital

Whilst there is a plethora of instruments and interventions that address risk reduction, mitigation and coping, by supporting or building up people's assets, and whilst significant progress has been made in recognising the need for civil society participation and national (rather than international) decision-making on food security initiatives, there are few practical proposals for instruments to achieve the commitments of the World Food Summit. Few, if any, instruments help people to address the *social, economic and political relationships* that keep them food insecure. Programmes can aim to encourage women's participation, but additional training may be needed to enable them to do so. Orphans may be the intended beneficiaries of food aid programmes, but this does not mean they will receive any food. We argue, therefore, not solely for dismantling institutions that contribute to social exclusion, but also for specific interventions to strengthen relationships for, or give voice to, those who are socially and politically excluded and economically vulnerable: this objective is too often overlooked. Examples might be training women to participate in local government or to work as implementing partners in the distribution of food aid. In India, quota systems are well intentioned and, perhaps, a useful first step towards achieving full participation, but caste and class often combine to reinforce traditional elitism, for example when real power lies in the 'backroom' where husbands, traders or local elites manipulate women and people of lower castes or tribes. The Right to Food Movement in India throws up similar issues (Box 3). Simply making information, for example about prices, food availability and food quality, more readily available to all groups in society can make an important contribution in this regard – the range of communication technologies now available in most parts of the developing world make this a potentially easy and cheap intervention.

Box 3: The Right to Food in India

Whilst through the Indian Constitution there is an obligation for the (central and state) Indian Government to fulfil the right to food of India's people, and despite the existence of many programmes focusing on food and malnutrition, there are many constraints to achieving food security. These include the need to strengthen existing programmes (including PDS and midday meal schemes) and the extension of the Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme across the whole of India.

However, the transfer of assets alone is unlikely to change without additional activities, including: better monitoring systems at central, state, district and village levels; NGO and citizens campaigns to ensure better functioning of programmes; and transparency and public accountability in government delivery systems. Thus, ensuring food security is as much about building relationships between different people in society, and ensuring voice for poor people, as it is about the transfer of assets and legal rights: 'The poor … cannot go to court every time the right to food is violated'.

Source: Dev (2003).

8 Conclusions

There is significant variation in natural, political, economic and social context at various levels of aggregation (state, region, community, household, intra-household), and thus in how households can attempt to deal with the risk of food insecurity during the course of the season, or at times of acute crisis. They may try, before the event, to reduce their sensitivity to hazards (e.g. drought-resistant crops, income diversification, insurance premiums, investment in social and political capital); or they may cope with the consequences of the hazard after the event (e.g. drawing down on assets, receiving help from family, community, government, reducing consumption, undertaking risky/unpleasant work). These coping strategies may not affect everyday living standards (e.g. drawing down on savings, insurance, transfers), but often they do, involving extra work or discomfort and, in the worst cases, affecting future welfare. Where significant numbers of people adopt coping strategies that have negative impacts, there may be wider effects in the rural and national economy.

In response to the sudden expansion of chronic food insecurity in Southern Africa in 2001–03, strategies relying on public sector interventions did not feature highly, compared with strategies reliant on market mechanisms. This was also the case in the 1991–92 food crisis in the region, when surveys showed that only 15% of households food needs were met from food aid (Eldridge, 2002). A number of important strategies involved 'expenditure switching': reducing expenditure on, for example, education and health, in order to preserve income for food purchases (Eldridge, 2003). Concerns are sometimes expressed that existing community coping mechanisms for dealing with food insecurity can be 'crowded out' by state social protection activities. However, Devereux (2001) argues that, in general, community transfers are not significant and are predominantly horizontal, i.e. between poor and very poor people. He quotes the impact of a public works programme where the third most common use of social protection income was to 'help other households'. The literature on inter-household vertical and horizontal transfers suggests that vertical transfers have reduced as a result of commercialisation and the growth of the cash economy (i.e. from better-off to poorer households). However, as Harland (2004) points out, there can also be negative transfers, an obvious example being the significant number of orphans of urban origin being sent to poorer rural areas in Southern Africa.

Food security might be strengthened through safety nets, or other interventions that form part of a broader social protection strategy. However, addressing food insecurity is different to addressing people's vulnerability. It may also include activities that are not traditionally seen as social protection, including boosting agricultural productivity, opening up regional trade in cereals, or improving early warning systems to alert policy-makers to particularly hazards. It involves addressing a wide range of factors, including not only current hazards but also longer-term trends, not only households' assets but also their relationships. And all of this is mediated to a significant degree by the influence of state, market and community institutions and processes, and needs to be addressed with reference to the specific local context.

Thus, social protection policies and instruments can make a significant contribution to food security. There are increasing overlaps in the language and conceptual frameworks through which food security and social protection strategies are defined. Many of the instruments that are central to social protection strategies have been used in food security strategies and so there are significant lessons for social protection from food security policy.

The first lesson is the recognition of the acute, transitory and chronic aspects of food security, the dangers of overemphasising acute aspects at the expense of chronic, and the

associated need for instruments to address and respond to chronic food insecurity through mitigation and reduction as well as through coping. Assessment and monitoring systems must be revised to take account of these differences.

Secondly, access to food is as important as the availability of food. Thus, there is not a technical (production) solution to the problem. Addressing access involves addressing relationships as well as increasing their asset status.

In conclusion, food insecurity is one manifestation of the vulnerability that social protection seeks to address. However, policies to address chronic food insecurity must embrace both economic growth (raising incomes) as well as social protection (reducing the variance of incomes (and thus vulnerability), protecting the consumption of the chronically poor, and providing access to basic services).

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10 Annex

Table 1 Progress of selected countries and regions towards the MDG on hunger

Region/ country	Total population (millions)			Number of people undernourished (millions)			Proportion of undernourished in total population (%)		
	1990–92	*1995–97*	*1999–2001*	*1990–92*	*1995–97*	*1999–2001*	*1990–92*	*1995–97*	*1999–2001*
Developing world	**4050.0**	**4418.6**	**4712.2**	**816.6**	**779.7**	**797.9**	**20**	**18**	**17**
Asia and the Pacific	**2812.2**	**3033.0**	**3204.8**	**566.8**	**496.4**	**505.2**	**20**	**16**	**16**
China	*1169.5*	*1231.0*	*1275.0*	*193.0*	*144.6*	*135.3*	*17*	*12*	*11*
India	*861.3*	*943.5*	*1008.9*	*214.5*	*194.7*	*213.7*	*25*	*21*	*21*
Cambodia	*10.0*	*11.7*	*13.1*	*4.3*	*5.2*	*5.0*	*43*	*45*	*38*
Indonesia	*185.6*	*200.6*	*212.1*	*16.6*	*11.4*	*12.6*	*9*	*6*	*6*
Latin America and the Caribbean	**442.2**	**481.2**	**512.0**	**59.0**	**55.3**	**53.4**	**13**	**11**	**10**
Brazil	*150.3*	*161.7*	*170.4*	*18.6*	*16.7*	*15.6*	*12*	*10*	*9*
Guatemala	*9.0*	*10.2*	*11.4*	*1.4*	*2.2*	*2.9*	*16*	*21*	*25*
Peru	*22.0*	*23.9*	*25.7*	*8.9*	*4.2*	*2.9*	*40*	*18*	*11*
Sub-Saharan Africa	**474.5**	**543.1**	**603.0**	**165.5**	**192.7**	**198.4**	**35**	**35**	**33**
Ethiopia	*Na*	*56.9*	*62.9*	*na*	*32.2*	*26.4*	*Na*	*57*	*42*
Mozambique	*14.1*	*16.8*	*18.3*	*9.7*	*10.3*	*9.7*	*69*	*62*	*53*
Zimbabwe	*10.5*	*11.7*	*12.6*	*4.5*	*5.1*	*4.9*	*43*	*44*	*39*

Source: FAO (2003).

Table 2 Examples and experience of interventions for achieving food security

	Activity		Appropriate	Advantages	Disadvantages	Feasible if
Risk reduction	Sectoral	Fertiliser and seed subsidies and handouts	For households with labour capacity that have been pushed back into subsistence production because of a lack of market access, inputs, etc.	Can be part of exit/sequencing strategy with other forms of transfer (such as food distribution). Can be appropriate way to encourage certain crops. Can encourage some dependency but encourage people to be productive	Lack of choice for recipients. Inputs subsidies in the form of loans can be administratively costly to recoup. Inputs can find their way across national borders if subsidies result in significantly different prices. May be inappropriate for PLWHA or where entitlements heavily dependent on non-agricultural activity	Inputs themselves can be procured and distributed on time
		Promote drought-resistant varieties	Moderated strategy where investment in high yielding varieties is risky and yield variance is high	Sacrifices growth for greater stability and decreased variance	Often lead to a reduction in yield potential	Capacity within extension service to support alternative varieties
	Macro-policy activities	Stabilise interest rates	Where households pushed into subsistence production because of high costs of microfinance for inputs loans	Enables farmers and other entrepreneurs to take greater risk, and potentially reap greater reward		Already have macroeconomic stability at national level
		Price Controls	Have high variability of prices	Producer price controls can act as an incentive for increased productivity. Consumer price controls can help to smooth consumption	It is difficult to support both producers and consumers at the same time	
	Inputs for work		Where vulnerable households have labour capacity	Payment in inputs rather than in cash decreases fungibility and misuse of payment	The timing of 'work' may prevent effective use of inputs. Not appropriate where there is acute hunger and danger of starvation	
Risk reduction and risk mitigation	Fair price shops/food distribution systems		Acts as both risk reducing (macro-level price control) and risk-mitigating (a buffer against supply shortages)	Supply infrastructure reduces likelihood of shortfall in specific geographical locations. Subsidies prices for consumers	Costs of transport, storage and handling are very high. Is subsidy, not handout, so still inaccessible to the very poorest who have no entitlement	
Risk mitigation	Weather insurance against rainfall deficits		Where crop failure insurance acts as a disincentive to sustained effort	Eliminates moral hazard	Enormous co-variant risk at regional level but possible if risk carried at international level	Insurance risk is carried by international insurers (risk is not co-variant at international level)
	National grain reserves		Offer buffer stock function	Suitable for countries that are land-locked where the costs of importing food are especially high	Reserves are unlikely to succeed if they are always expected to cover their costs. Costs need to be weighed against the frequency of drawing down on reserves	Can be managed according to principles of accountability, transparency and cost-effectiveness
	Regional grain reserves		Where there is not too great a co-variant risk	Stimulate intra-regional trade(?)	Danger of co-variant risk because countries are likely to draw down on the reserve at the same time	

	Microfinance and credit		Opportunity to *ex ante* preparation for a risk	Enables diversification, income and consumption smoothing	Danger of increasing indebtedness as an *ex post* response. Danger of co-variant risk and thus sustainability, because households likely to fail to make repayments at similar times	
Risk coping	Food aid		For severely labour-constrained households where no household members are able to engage in productive activity	If locally sourced, can stimulate intra-regional trade. Often relatively cheap for national governments because food is provided by donors who seek to reduce their own surpluses	Lack of choice for recipients. Creates dependency unless appropriate sequencing of corresponding risk reducing activity.	Transparency and accountability amongst donors, governments, implementing partners
	Cash transfers, for example social pensions for elderly and orphans		For households that are unable to engage in the productive economy AND households that can invest in livelihood activities	Provide safety net for those unable to engage in productive economy but can also be used for investment in the productive economy. Give recipients the opportunity to exercise choice	Governments and donors reluctant to fund recurrent budget lines	Sufficient financial and administrative capacity, transparency and accountability at all levels
	School feeding, food-for-education and school bursaries		Appropriate for labour-constrained households where children are often taken out of school	Can increase enrolment, particularly of girls, and can reduce dropout rates, thus reducing the likelihood of transmission of poverty and/or food insecurity to next generation	Unless incorporate take-home rations, the opportunity costs (of keeping children away from school in order to work in the fields) may be higher than benefits of feeding. Bursaries can overcome these opportunity costs in part	Appropriate balance between external projectised inputs and community ownership (Bennett, 2003)
	Public works programmes	Cash for work	When recipients are able to work	Avoids dependency. Can be self-targeting and enable construction or maintenance of public or community assets and/or enable training or development of skills	Self-targeting throws up ethical questions about payment of lower than market-rate wages. Inappropriate for chronically vulnerable households without labour power	
		Food for work	When recipients are able to work	Avoids dependency. Can be self-targeting and enable construction or maintenance of public or community assets and/or enable training or development of skills	Self-targeting throws up ethical questions about payment of less desirable food (e.g. yellow maize). Inappropriate for chronically vulnerable households without labour power	

Source: Adapted from FFSSA (2004).

Table 3 Selected national food security strategies

Country	Food security strategy and progress
Brazil	The Zero Hunger Program, established in 2002, aims to attack the structural causes of poverty and provide sufficient purchasing power for every Brazilian to have access to food. The programme is steeped heavily in the language of rights-based approaches. Activities aimed at reducing poverty include credits to small farmers, government purchase guarantees for farm produce. The main component of the programme is a food stamp resource transfer.
China	Impressive progress towards achieving the MDG on hunger from 30% of the population in 1979–81 to 9% of the population in 1998–2000. Success attributable to **rising domestic food production** driven by investments in irrigation and land reclamation, high-yielding seed variety development, improved farming practices, and improved farmers' production incentives. In spite of rapid urbanisation, people have maintained entitlements through employment resulting from growing export-oriented manufacturing industry. The most vulnerable are poorer households in remote, interior regions; former employees of state-owned enterprises that have closed following market liberalisation and recent migrants from rural to urban areas who have limited entitlements to state-run protection schemes.
Ethiopia	With average plot sizes of 0.25 ha and severe erosion in the traditional production areas in the Highlands, Ethiopia has become structurally dependent on food aid for up to 20% of the population. Important issues relating to resettlement, land tenure, and policy towards marginal groups need to be resolved.
India	Numbers of undernourished fell then increased back to the 1990 level through the 1990s. Proportion undernourished has declined from 25% to 21% (FAO, 2003). Policy focus on achieving self-sufficiency. Meeting food supply through imports is politically unacceptable. The Tenth Five-Year Plan (2002–07) prioritises utilisation and consumption issues with a focus on nutrition and health education, intensified health monitoring and elimination of micronutrient deficiency diseases.
Indonesia	Strong economic growth between the 1960s and mid 1990s spurred impressive increases in both national and household food security. Government policy was to achieve self-sufficiency in rice through the parastatal BULOG's marketing and distribution of rice, and through increased use of fertilisers and price controls. Following economic collapse in 1997, the main food safety net has been a targeted food subsidy programme.
Lesotho	Food security policies in 1970s and 1980s focused on availability and self-sufficiency because of Lesotho's dependence on imports from South Africa with whom it had an uneasy political relationship. The drive for self-sufficiency gave way, in part, to commercial agriculture in the 1990s. In the draft PRSP, the second priority of achieving food security focuses on agricultural production and productivity objectives. More recently, in the context of growing numbers of orphans and elderly headed households, the government has introduced an old-age pension.
Malawi	Despite intensive promotion, during the 1980s and more recently, of hybrid maize and fertiliser technology – a Malawi Green Revolution, yields remain low, a structural food deficit of several thousand tonnes pa has emerged, and malnutrition indicators have remained high. Nationwide free inputs programmes have been a major component of government and donor response since 1998 and, under optimal conditions, have the potential to reduce the length of the hungry season at household level and contribute to national food availability. However, issues of price instability, strengthening entitlements to food through income and transfers, and nutrition education with respect to children and people living with AIDS have not yet been successfully addressed.
Zambia	With 40% of the population in urban areas, formerly associated with the copper sector, Zambia faces twin challenges of supporting both urban and rural food security, both of which have deteriorated significantly in recent years. There is a drift back to rural areas, where there is little land shortage at present, but low population densities mean the delivery of infrastructure and services is difficult. Additionally, the maize economy is highly politicised. Conservation farming Is widely promoted as are various models of contract farming. There is an urgent need to implement organised social protection in urban areas, where levels of malnutrition are highest. The current focus is on food aid and free inputs.

Sources: Gill *et al.* (2003), van den Boogaard *et al.* (2004), FAO (2003), Belik and Del Grossi (2003), FFSSA Country Issues Papers, Adams (2004).

11 Endnotes

[1] Research Fellows, Rural Policy and Governance Group, Overseas Development Institute

[2] The concepts of hunger, food insecurity and undernutrition are overlapping. According to Gillespie and Haddad (2004), food insecurity relates to the risk of loss of access to food. Food insecurity can exist with or without actual hunger. Undernutrition can exist as a result of lack of access to food, or non-food reasons, e.g. poor food preparation, unequal intra-household distribution.

[3] Co-variant shocks affect the population as a whole in a defined area (e.g. drought); idiosyncratic shocks affect individuals (e.g. old age).

[4] See, for example, McGregor (2000); Wood (2001); Bevan (2003).

[5] See, for example Beck, (1999); Giddens (2001); Wood (2001).

[6] see http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/ for more and a link to indicators of performance.

[7] Under-5's indicators are considered to be more reliable than percentage of the population malnourished, largely owing to the ways in which data is collected.

[8] For more on this, see Schofield, R (2001) 'New technologies, new challenges: information management, coordination and agency independence', *Humanitarian Exchange* No. 21 (http://www.odihpn.org/pdfbin/newsletter021.pdf); Darcy, J. and Hoffmann, C-A. (2003) 'Humanitarian needs assessment and decision-making', *HPG Briefing*, No.13 (http://www.odi.org.uk/hpg/papers/hpgbrief13.pdf).

[9] Although this represents a subsidy, the scale of inclusion error is reduced by the self-selecting and visible nature of the target beneficiaries (only obviously ill people and school children) and the non-transferable nature of the services.

[10] And response to the food aid component of the appeal was much higher than to other components.

[11] For more on options for ensuring national and regional grain reserves, see for example Coulter, J.P. and Poulton, C. (2001) 'Cereal market liberalisation in Africa', Chapter 6 in *Commodity market reform: lessons of two decades*, edited by Akiyama, T., Baffes, T., Larson, D. and Varangis, P., Washington, DC: World Bank.

[12] The potential for private sector commercial imports, and the negative impact on this of vacillating and hurriedly announced government import plans, is well described for Malawi in Whiteside *et al*. (2003).

[13] For more on this, see Cromwell *et al.* (1996) in relation to inputs, Whiteside *et al.* (2003) in relation to food in Malawi, and Mufwambi and Scott (forthcoming) in relation to Zambia.

[14] For more on the arguments for and against self-targeting based on payment in inferior goods, see Slater, (2004).