

Livelihood Insecurity and Social Protection: A Re-emerging Issue in Rural Development

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Risk and vulnerability have been rediscovered as key features of rural livelihoods and poverty, and are currently a focus of policy attention. The poor themselves try to manage uncertainty using a variety of ex-ante and ex-post risk management strategies, and through community support systems, but these are both fragile and economically damaging. State interventions working through food, labour or credit markets have proved expensive and unsustainable in the past, though encouraging and innovative institutional partnerships are emerging. This article argues that the way forward lies in new approaches to social protection which underpin production as well as consumption: new thinking recognises the food security and livelihood-protecting functions of public interventions (such as fertiliser and seed subsidies) which were previously dismissed as 'market-distorting'.

Introduction

Livelihood insecurity is a re-emerging issue in rural development. During the 1980s, the food security literature identified cyclical and acute food insecurity (seasonality and famine respectively) as central features of rural poverty in tropical regions (Chambers et al., 1981; Sen, 1981), while pioneering work on vulnerability highlighted the greater exposure and lower resilience of the poor to idiosyncratic or covariant livelihood shocks (e.g. ill-health or drought respectively) (Chambers, 1989; Downing, 1991a). Then, until the late 1990s, income variability all but disappeared from the development discourse. The poverty literature of the 1990s characterised 'the poor' as a static, identifiable group of 1.2 billion people, while global summits defined the overriding objective of development interventions as lifting half of this identifiable group above the poverty line by 2015.

However, several recent strands of development thinking do recognise the importance of income variability. Livelihood insecurity is implicit – as the antithesis of 'sustainability' – in the rapidly growing literature on 'sustainable rural livelihoods' (Scoones, 1998; Carney, 1998, 1999; Swift and Hamilton, 2001). Income variability and the high risk attached to rainfed agriculture are acknowledged as being major drivers of livelihood diversification (Reardon, 1997; Ellis, 2000), multi-spatial livelihoods (Start, 2001), 'split households' and 'deagrarianisation' (Bryceson, 2000). 'Participatory poverty assessments' (Robb, 1999) and findings from the 'Voices of the Poor' project (Narayan et al., 2000) confirmed that physical and economic insecurity greatly exacerbates ill-being in poor families. With the application of economic risk theory to

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poverty analysis (Siegel and Alwang, 1999), and recent research into ‘poverty dynamics’ (Baulch and Hoddinott, 2000), income variability has been rediscovered by mainstream economists as a significant feature of living in poverty.

Concomitantly, a new policy agenda for addressing livelihood insecurity is emerging. The *World Development Report 2000/2001* identifies three arenas for action: opportunity, empowerment, and security (World Bank, 2000a).¹ The Target Strategy Paper on ‘economic well-being’ of the UK Department for International Development adopts an analogous triad: growth, equity, and security (DFID, 2000).² DFID is developing a programme of work on ‘social protection’ (Norton et al., 2000; Devereux 2001a). The World Bank is developing its own programme of work on ‘social risk management’ (Holzmann and Jørgenson, 2000). This agenda promises to advance the debate on appropriate interventions for livelihood shocks and instability beyond the conventional menu of emergency food aid, public works projects and vulnerable group feeding programmes. To date, however, the extension of social security or consumption-smoothing measures to the rural poor in developing countries remains – because of fiscal and administrative constraints, political instability or lack of political will – a distant ideal.

This article has two purposes. It sets out the nature of the risks – both covariant and idiosyncratic – that people in rural areas face; and it discusses alternative interventions – private (‘coping strategies’ and community support mechanisms), public (social protection) and market-based (insurance) – for addressing livelihood insecurity. First, though, it is necessary to clarify the terminology.

Risk and vulnerability

What is ‘risk’, and how does it differ from ‘uncertainty’ and ‘vulnerability’? Sinha and Lipton (1999) prefer the term ‘damaging fluctuations’ to ‘risk’, but fluctuation itself is a composite variable, including the probability, frequency and severity of deviation from a ‘norm’ or average.

Risk and uncertainty are defined by economists as stochastic events with known and unknown probability distributions respectively (Siegel and Alwang, 1999). Both result in welfare losses. For example, seasonality in rainfed agriculture is a known risk which forces farmers to engage in sub-optimal consumption-smoothing behaviour. Dependence on a single crop for food or cash introduces unpredictable vulnerability to a collapse in production or prices. Pursuing an undiversified livelihood strategy matters less if the source of income is secure and stable than if it is subject to uncertainty or intertemporal fluctuation.

Vulnerability is a concept that combines *exposure* to a threat with *susceptibility* or sensitivity to its adverse consequences.³ Although poverty and vulnerability are not

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1. In the 2000/2001 *World Development Report*, ‘security’ updates ‘safety nets’ – the third prong of the 1990s’ ‘new poverty agenda’ as set out in the 1990 *World Development Report* (World Bank, 1990).
 2. Curiously, IFAD’s *Rural Poverty Report 2001* explicitly ignores ‘security and vulnerability’ (IFAD, 2001:4), although it recognises that the rural poor are ‘much more vulnerable to fluctuations in well-being than the urban and the non-poor: the fluctuations are larger and resilience is less’ (IFAD, 2001:30).
 3. This definition follows Chambers (1989:1): ‘Vulnerability here refers to exposure to contingencies and stress, and difficulty in coping with them. Vulnerability thus has two sides: an external side of risks, shocks, and stress to which an individual is subject; and an internal side which is defencelessness, meaning

synonymous, the poor face greater exposure to livelihood threats – they are more likely to live in marginal areas (Wisner, 1993) – and they are more susceptible to shocks, because their asset holdings (broadly defined to include productive assets, savings, human capital and social capital) are lower. Vulnerability is determined partly by risk factors that are *generic* to groups of people who are connected geographically or by shared risk characteristics ('exposure'), and partly by risk factors that are *specific* to individuals or individual households ('susceptibility'). Although an entire community might face exposure to a livelihood threat such as a drought or food price inflation, susceptibility or resilience is differentially distributed across households depending on relative wealth and access to alternative income sources, including support from extended family and social networks. Moser's 'asset vulnerability framework' models household vulnerability as a function of the number, diversity and value of assets it owns.⁴ But quantifying vulnerability is notoriously problematic. A proxy for exposure (at any level from household to national) could be the coefficient of variation (CV) of food production or earned income. A proxy for susceptibility might be the proportion of food consumption or income derived from the household's (or nation's) primary economic activity (Devereux, 1998).

The rural poor have always been particularly exposed and especially vulnerable to livelihood shocks and variability. If anything, their livelihood insecurity is likely to increase in coming years, due, *inter alia*, to rising global inequality (Wade, 2001), increasing incidence of HIV/AIDS,⁵ continuing civil conflicts and political instability, increasingly severe bad weather events, the adverse consequences of globalisation, declining aid flows, and restricted access to technological innovations such as potentially beneficial Genetically Modified Organisms.

The causes of shocks and insecurity can be categorised in various ways, including:

- Scale: macro-level (national to international) economic shocks such as global recession⁶ or terms-of-trade volatility,⁷ meso-level (subnational to community) covariant shocks such as civil war or extreme weather events,⁸ micro-level (individual or household) idiosyncratic shocks such as ill-health;

a lack of means to cope without damaging loss'. (See also Bayliss-Smith, 1991; Downing, 1991a, 1991b; Moser, 1998.)

4. 'Vulnerability is therefore closely linked to asset ownership. The means of resistance are the assets and entitlements that individuals, households, or communities can mobilise and manage in the face of hardship. The more assets people have, the less vulnerable they are, and the greater the erosion of people's assets, the greater their insecurity' (Moser, 1998:3).
5. Comparatively little research to date has examined the livelihood impact of health shocks in poor households, but as AIDS continues to spread in rural Africa and Asia – adult HIV prevalence already exceeds 25% in many African countries – this is rapidly becoming a critical rural development issue.
6. Globalisation presents both opportunities and risks to all citizens in poor countries. The financial crisis of 1997-9 highlighted the risks of volatility in global financial markets: urban living standards fell dramatically in East Asia, Russia and Brazil, but rural poverty also increased, mainly because of inflows of retrenched workers from urban areas (World Bank, 2000b:48).
7. Terms-of-trade volatility was higher for sub-Saharan Africa in the period 1961-97 than for any other world region, mainly because of price variability in the primary commodity exports on which African economies depend. Several studies have demonstrated that terms-of-trade volatility has negative effects on real GDP growth, and that GDP volatility increases the incidence of poverty (World Bank, 2000b:49-51).
8. Weather variability may be increasing as a consequence of global warming. Over a dozen extreme weather events occurred between 1997 and 2000, including severe droughts in the Horn of Africa and northwest

- Predictability: cyclical variability (economic cycles such as seasonality, which is predictable in its timing but not its severity); stochastic risk (e.g. drought- or flood-prone areas); unpredictable downturns (e.g. the East Asian financial crisis);
- Trigger: illness and injury, old age, crime and domestic violence, unemployment and other labour market risks, harvest failure and food price fluctuations (World Bank, 2000a; see Table 1 for an alternative typology).

Table 1: Livelihood risks facing the rural poor

Nature of risk	People at risk
Crop production risks (drought, pests, & others)	Smallholders with little income diversification & limited access to improved technology (e.g. HYVs) Landless farm labourers
Agricultural trade risks (disruption of exports or imports)	Smallholders who specialise in an export crop Small-scale pastoralists Poor households that depend on imported food
Food price risks (large, sudden price rises)	Poor, net food-purchasing households, including deficit food producers in rural areas`
Employment risks	Wage-earning households & informal sector employees (in peri-urban areas &, when there is a sudden crop production failure, in rural areas)
Health risks (e.g. infectious diseases resulting in labour-productivity decline)	Entire communities, but especially households that cannot afford preventive or curative care, & vulnerable members of these households
Political & policy failure risks	Households in war zones & areas of civil unrest Households in low-potential areas not connected to growth centres via infrastructure
Demographic risks (individual risks affecting large groups)	Women, especially those without education Female-headed households Children at weaning age The aged

Source: von Braun et al. (1992:17).

One way of analysing vulnerability is to divide populations into functional categories (e.g. by livelihood systems or by demographic cohorts) and to identify the sources of

India, cyclones and floods in Bangladesh, floods in Orissa, Peru and Mozambique, mudslides in Venezuela, Hurricane George in Haiti and Hurricane Mitch in Central America (Bundell and Pendleton, 2000:1). Predicted environmental effects of global warming include rising sea levels, intensifying droughts and desertification. Predicted human consequences include population displacement and chronic food insecurity.

risk faced by each category. Table 2 lists IFAD's categories of 'functionally vulnerable groups' – defined as (rural) people who are economically insecure and particularly sensitive to changes in external conditions – together with headcount estimates for each category from the late 1980s. They are either 'already included in the core of rural population below the poverty line' or 'subsist on the border-line and can easily fall below it, temporarily or persistently, as a result of any deterioration in their conditions' (Jazairy et al., 1992:468). Although IFAD's categorisation presents some difficulties,⁹ functional classification provides a useful starting point for analysing livelihood risk.

Table 2: Functionally vulnerable rural population in 64 developing countries

Functionally vulnerable groups	Population (1988) '000	% of total vulnerable population
Smallholder farmers	713,141	64.3
Landless	324,177	29.2
Ethnic indigenous peoples	58,929	5.3
Small and artisanal fishermen	51,596	4.7
Nomadic pastoralists	9,875	0.9
Refugees/displaced	8,349	0.8
Total	1,109,496	100.0
Female-headed households	221,653	20.0

Source: Jazairy et al. (1992: 47).

Addressing risk and vulnerability

Risk management strategies

How do the rural poor prepare for and respond to livelihood insecurity? This section briefly considers *ex-ante* risk mitigation behaviour, *ex-post* 'coping strategies', and community support systems.

Ex-ante risk mitigation: Where input credit and crop insurance markets are missing, households whose livelihoods derive from rainfed agriculture mitigate production risk by choosing risk-reducing techniques and by cultivating low-risk but low-return crops. Though partly effective, these *ex-ante* risk management strategies are economically inefficient – since variability is a crucial determinant of vulnerability, households tend

9. For instance, the inclusion of 'ethnic indigenous peoples' in a categorisation based on livelihood systems is confusing. Also, a fully gendered approach would acknowledge the vulnerability of women living in male-headed households, and the category female-headed households needs to be disaggregated. On this last point, a controversial study on aid targeting in Ethiopia found that female-headed households received four times as much food aid as male-headed households, yet no significant differences were observed in food security indicators between the two household categories (Clay et al., 1998).

to choose lower but less variable yields over yield maximisation – and they retard agricultural and economic growth. Evidence from Tanzania suggests that this behaviour contributes to a rural poverty trap (Dercon, 1996). Poor rural households also spread risk by diversifying their livelihoods away from farming, and pursuing a range of economic activities which offer variable returns that, ideally, are not closely correlated with returns to agriculture (Reardon, 1997; Ellis, 2000).

Ex-post coping strategies: Davies (1996:35) defines coping strategies as ‘short-term responses to unusual food stress’ and adaptation as ‘coping strategies which have become permanently incorporated into the normal cycle of activities’.¹⁰ So, put crudely, coping strategies are responses to adverse events or shocks, while adaptive strategies are adjustments to adverse trends or processes. Coping strategies are necessary because the poor, already subsisting on inadequate incomes, are highly vulnerable to income shocks since they also lack asset buffers.

The literature on coping behaviour recognises that households facing food shortages are forced to trade off short-term consumption needs against longer-term economic viability. Corbett (1988) synthesised several case studies from Africa and South Asia and identified a common pattern of three discrete stages, each reflecting increasing desperation: insurance mechanisms (e.g. savings), disposal of productive assets, and destitution behaviour (distress migration). The sequence of coping strategy adoption is determined not only by the *effectiveness* of the strategy in terms of bridging the food gap, but also by the *cost* and *reversibility* of each action. Strategies that have little long-run cost are adopted first (such as food rationing and drawing down savings). Strategies with higher long-run costs that are difficult to reverse are adopted later (e.g. selling the family’s plough). Finally, survival strategies (such as migrating off the land) reflect economic destitution and a *failure* to cope.

In the absence of markets for financial intermediation, the rural poor hold savings in the form of liquid assets such as cash balances, or lumpy assets such as livestock. Paxson (1992) found that vulnerable rural households build up savings (in cash and assets) precisely to draw them down during bad years. Jacoby and Skoufias (1998) provide evidence that poor households draw on savings, inter-household transfers, and informal credit markets to smooth seasonal fluctuations in income. Rosenzweig and Wolpin (1993) found that Indian households use asset holdings to smooth seasonal and interannual consumption, while Dercon (1996) reached similar conclusions in Tanzania. Livestock are purchased during good rainfall years (positive income shocks) and are sold for grain in response to bad weather events (negative income shocks). But these strategies do not allow poor households to ride out repeated or severe shocks (e.g. several years of drought as in southern Ethiopia during 1998–2000, or devastating flood as in Mozambique in early 2000). Kochar (1999) finds that rural households in India smooth their consumption following production shocks by the increased participation of male household members in the labour market. This effect is insignificant in terms of

10. Though widely used in the literature, ‘coping strategies’ seems a rather pejorative term for the complexity and diversity of behavioural adjustments that people adopt in times of hardship. It also risks overstating the resilience of the poor. If people who are already malnourished cut their food consumption to one meal a day – as rural Africans routinely do during the annual *soudure* – in what sense are they ‘coping’?

female labour participation rates, however, suggesting that this option is less available to women – and to labour-constrained female-headed households.

Community support systems: ‘Informal safety nets’ are a subset of the range of coping strategies that people adopt in response to livelihood shocks, and refer specifically to non-market transfers of goods and services between households. Conceptually, informal safety nets are one manifestation of ‘social capital’. They involve drawing on social networks - extended family, friends and neighbours, wealthy patrons - for assistance in times of need, with or without expectations of reciprocity. Empirical evidence from studies across sub-Saharan Africa suggests that traditional practices of ‘vertical’ redistribution (transfers from wealthier ‘patrons’ to poorer ‘clients’) are rapidly disappearing under processes of commercialisation (Devereux, 1999). ‘Horizontal’ redistributive practices (transfers between people of similar economic and social status) remain widespread but are highly vulnerable to covariant risk, a prime example being a drought that eliminates food production surpluses across a community.

Moser (1998) highlights declining extended family and patron-client support systems as a major source of vulnerability for the poor, given their limited access to other categories of assets. As already noted, vulnerability is differentially distributed within communities according to income and asset levels, as well as livelihood portfolios. The ultra-poor face constrained access to gift exchanges, informal credit and asset sales to mitigate risk, because they have weak social networks and lack tradable assets (including labour). In this context, the argument that public transfers will have little net impact because they will simply displace well-functioning private transfer arrangements (Cox and Jimenez, 1995) is overstated. Informal transfers are heavily concentrated among the poor themselves, and they are not robust in the face of covariant shocks. Displacing informal safety nets with public or market-based alternatives is likely to be socially and economically preferable.

Market-based interventions

The theoretical economics literature on risk and vulnerability focuses on market failures – in asset markets, capital markets, labour markets. In the past, developing country governments routinely intervened in food and other markets in an attempt to correct or compensate for market failures. Agricultural parastatals bought up grain post-harvest which was released at low prices during the ‘hungry season’ (counter-seasonal price stabilisation), while food prices were fixed across the country (panterritorial pricing) or allowed to vary only between a defined ‘floor’ and ‘ceiling’ (price banding). These attempts to stabilise food consumption in contexts of spatial and intertemporal supply and price variability were crude and expensive, but they were often fairly effective in food security terms.

Despite their popularity – especially with consumers, who typically benefited more than producers – these interventions ultimately proved to be fiscally and politically unsustainable. Economists now see the solution to rural vulnerability as lying in the improved performance of private actors, and the removal of inefficiencies and distortions (e.g. price subsidies) introduced by non-market actors such as governments and NGOs. Dercon (1999) argues that attention should be given to improving the

functioning of asset markets and the terms of trade between assets and consumption goods. Kochar (1999) focuses on the labour market as a mechanism to smooth consumption. More attractive and accessible microcredit and savings schemes would not only raise production and incomes, but could also improve savings rates and build asset buffers. A necessary precondition, however, is stability in the macroeconomic and policy environment.

Private credit and insurance markets for risk-sharing have generally failed to emerge in rural areas of poor countries. The rural poor are not perceived as attractive clients to bankers and insurance firms, because of information asymmetries, chronic poverty, lack of collateral, covariant risk and high transaction costs. Microfinance institutions can overcome some of these constraints – with social collateral substituting for physical collateral and reducing information asymmetries – but to date their coverage (outside Bangladesh) is limited. However, recent empirical evidence that access to credit is more important for the poor than the interest rate suggests that the cost of credit is not a major barrier to uptake, and that great potential exists for commercial provision.

Despite this history of rationed access and persistent market failures in rural areas, policy attention is increasingly focused on private sector solutions to rural risk and vulnerability. Donors are encouraging developing country governments to promote an enabling policy environment for traders and other commercial actors, not just in agricultural input and product markets but also with financial services. Skees (2000) has recently argued for index-linked crop insurance contracts, meaning that payouts are triggered by thresholds such as a percentage rainfall deficit, rather than insuring individual harvest outcomes. A major advantage of this approach is lower administrative costs, since no on-farm inspections or individual loss adjustments are required.

Social protection

Given the limited capacity of poor families and communities to sustain themselves through livelihood shocks or cycles by drawing on their own resources, the case for public intervention is overwhelming. Redistributive transfers to the poor can serve either a ‘social assistance’ function – reducing the incidence or depth of chronic poverty – or a ‘social insurance’ function – smoothing consumption and preventing destitution (or even mortality) following transitory shocks.

Social protection has been defined as ‘public interventions to (i) assist individuals, households, and communities better manage risk, and (ii) provide support to the critically poor’ (Holzmann and Jørgensen, 2000:3). Alternatively, social protection is ‘public actions taken in response to levels of vulnerability, risk and deprivation which are deemed socially unacceptable within a given polity or society’ (Norton et al., 2000:v). Holzmann and Jørgensen’s conceptual framework of ‘social risk management’ argues for social protection as both a safety net and a springboard out of poverty. Guiding principles include: to help the poor maintain access to basic social services, avoid social exclusion, minimise the adoption of erosive coping strategies following livelihood shocks, promote the adoption of higher-return economic activities, and avoid inefficient informal risk-sharing mechanisms.

Cash or food transfer programmes (employment-based safety nets, social pensions, school feeding) provide a range of benefits beyond direct consumption support to beneficiaries. Where regular cash transfers are provided to the poor, the impacts are magnified by income multipliers, investment in agriculture and family enterprises, informal redistribution to relatives and friends, and stimulation of local trade. Even food aid is a form of income transfer, since it releases household resources for other priorities. In non-emergency contexts, the availability of social safety nets encourages risk-taking behaviour by the poor, such as diversification into activities with higher returns than precautionary risk-spreading strategies allow. At the individual level, even tiny consumption-smoothing public transfers can have ‘mean-shifting’ outcomes, since the capital-constrained poor often invest some incremental income in farming or small-scale enterprises. A substantial proportion of social pension income in Namibia and South Africa, for instance, is allocated to the schooling costs of pensioners’ grandchildren, in the expectation that educated relatives are more likely to secure jobs that will reduce the family’s dependence on low-income, drought-prone agriculture (Devereux, 2001b).

In general, however, the impact of social safety nets on aggregate poverty tends to be limited, for a range of reasons. Many safety-net programmes are introduced reactively (too late to provide effective social protection or to influence risk-taking behaviour), they face logistical and institutional constraints in implementation, they are often poorly targeted, and the scale and coverage of public transfers never match the extent and depth of the poverty problem.¹¹

Social protection interventions also need to be tailored to the problem they are intended to address (Grosh, 1993). As a rule, *ex-ante* risk reduction is preferable to *ex-post* risk management. Proactive interventions can reduce or mitigate risk – e.g. irrigation to reduce yield variability in rainfed agriculture – while reactive interventions can only support coping strategies – e.g. food aid after harvests fail. Where consumption transfers are introduced to compensate for declines in agricultural production, the question arises whether supporting agriculture might not be more sustainable and development-oriented than transferring food or cash to buy food.

In Malawi, for instance, an initial response to deteriorating food security in the early 1990s was to increase food aid deliveries in a series of ‘emergency operations’. Since the mid-1990s, however, a consortium of donors (led by DFID) has financed an annual programme of free distribution of fertiliser and seeds to farmers, on the basis that subsidising food production is more sensible and efficient than subsidising food consumption (Devereux, 2000). This reversal of 1990s orthodoxy – which saw fertiliser prices in Malawi increase sixteen-fold following the Fertiliser Subsidy Removal Programme – suggests that a broader shift may be occurring in development thinking, one that recognises the food-security and livelihood-protecting functions of public interventions which were dismissed during the 1980s as ‘market-distorting’. Whether or not this is evidence of a pendulum swing, it is significant (and ironic) that economically

11. A partial exception is provided by employment-based safety nets, most famously the Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme in India, which is demand- rather than supply-driven in the sense that MEGS is legally required to provide low-wage employment to anyone who reports for work (Ravallion et al., 1993).

rational policies to support smallholder agriculture are now being reintroduced in Malawi under the policy umbrella of social protection.

Conclusion

Livelihood insecurity is not just a symptom of poverty; it is a contributory cause. Sustainable rural development therefore requires tackling vulnerability as well as reducing poverty. Since vulnerability is correlated with lack of assets, any developmental intervention that increases the poor's control over assets will indirectly enhance livelihood security. This suggests that it is important not to define social protection too narrowly, by excluding all interventions that do not directly support consumption. Land reform, agricultural research, microcredit, even education subsidies can have positive production as well as social protection impacts. Conversely, redistributive transfers can raise the incomes of the poor in the long term as well as smooth their consumption in the short term.

A powerful argument against comprehensive social protection in developing countries is its cost.¹² Redistributive transfer programmes are alleged to be fiscally unaffordable and unsustainable – though, in reality, all public spending allocations are policy choices. To date, income transfers to the rural poor (especially in Africa) have been dominated by donor-financed emergency relief and public works programmes. Upgrading these *ad hoc* interventions to institutionalised social protection measures – in non-emergency contexts – for chronically poor and acutely vulnerable rural populations is a major fiscal and political challenge.

In this context, it is encouraging to observe that new institutional arrangements for social provisioning are emerging. The old dichotomies – state *versus* market, public *versus* private transfers – are unable to capture the diversity and complexity of relationships between various actors – government, markets, donors, NGOs, CBOs, social networks – that together provide some degree of livelihood security to the poor. If current trends continue, a growing range of intermediate forms will occupy the institutional space between publicly provided social protection programmes and the emergence of well functioning and fully integrated markets, including a variety of public-private-‘third sector’ partnerships. How effectively these arrangements will work in practice is a critical emerging issue in rural development.

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12. It is not surprising, for instance, that universal non-contributory social pensions in Africa are found only in small countries with high income inequality – Botswana and Namibia – and not in large countries with predominantly poor populations (such as Ethiopia or Sudan).

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