



SUMMARY BRIEF

May 2014

Social Protection for Food Security: 8 Lessons from Successful Experiments

In West Africa, social transfers have evolved considerably in recent years, becoming more regular and predictable systems. There are still, however, no true national social protection systems for rural people guaranteed by the state and implemented in a sustainable manner. In other regions of the world, such systems have existed for several years: in Brazil (*Fome Zero* [zero hunger]) and Mexico (*Oportunidades*) in Latin America, and also in Southern Africa. What lessons can we learn from these experiences for West Africa?

Lesson #1: Act on Several Fronts

In Brazil, the 'Zero Hunger' strategy integrates the various dimensions of food insecurity. It is characterised by the combination of emergency measures and medium-to-long-term measures. It relies on instruments that reach both the rural world and urban populations. Finally, it deploys its interventions on the various dimensions of food security (production, markets, access to food, nutrition) (*see table*). The different programmes are interconnected: for example, the national school food programme aims to provide free meals to students and plans for 30% of the food to be purchased from local family farmers through the public food acquisition programme.

Brazil's Zero Hunger Strategy Programmes

Access to Food <i>Bolsa Familia</i> (cash transfers) National School Meal Programme (PNAE) Cisterns People's Restaurants and Community Kitchens Food Banks Urban Agriculture Food and Nutrition Oversight System Vitamin A and Iron Distribution Food and Nutrition for Indigenous Communities Food Consumption and Nutrition Education Promotion of Healthy Consumption Habits Workers' Food Programme (PAT) Lowered Taxes on Food Baskets	Strengthening Family Farming National Programme to Strengthen Family Farming (PRONAF: subsidised interest rates for family farmers) Harvest Insurance Family Farm Insurance Public Food Acquisition Programme (PAA) Price Guarantee Programme for Family Farms
	Income Generation Social and Vocational Training Solidarity Economy and Inclusive Growth Food Security and Local Development Partnership Food Security and Nutrition Organisation Recyclable Material Collection Cooperatives Microcredit
Promotion of Partnership and Social Mobilisation Social Assistance Reference Centre Social Mobilisation and Civic Education Capacity Building for Public and Social Agents Volunteer Work and Grants Partnerships with the Private Sector and NGOs Social Development Councils	

Lesson #2: Adopt an Inter-Ministerial Approach

Setting up systems that group together several programmes in a coherent way requires good coordination among all actors involved. In Brazil, the Inter-Ministerial Chamber for Food and Nutrition Security (CAISAN) brings together representatives of the 19 ministries involved in the strategy. Coordination has been entrusted to a specific ministry: the Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger. In Botswana, several ministries implement a set of social protection programmes: the Ministry of Local Administration (public works and financial aid), the Department of Social Services (cash and food transfers), the Ministry of Education (school meals), and the Ministry of Health (distribution of food rations to children, pregnant women and nursing mothers). Recently, the country launched a process to harmonise, rationalise and consolidate these various programmes. In West Africa, inter-ministerial coordination structures exist in some countries such as Niger. In its new National Food and Nutrition Security Policy, Burkina Faso also aims to coordinate and harmonise existing programmes. But coordination between institutions is a complex process—one that remains to be strengthened in the region. What is more, some experts wonder whether the decision to base the social protection policy on Ministries of Agriculture (through national agricultural investment plans) is most relevant.

Lesson #3: Show Political Determination at the Highest Level of Government

In Brazil, the success of the establishment of the 'Zero Hunger' strategy is largely due to the political determination of the country's president, Lula da Silva. The progress in social protection in Southern Africa was also carried by the strong determination of the heads of state of these countries, often in electoral contexts. On the contrary, in West Africa, social protection seems to have until at least recently been mainly carried by international aid actors. However, since the start of the 2000s, the crisis response programmes of these actors have more fully involved governments and sought to integrate national policy frameworks. Within ECOWAS, the 'Zero Hunger in West Africa' strategy, in which social protection is a large component, is designed as a mobilising programme around the priority project of eradicating hunger and seems to reveal a degree of political determination.

Launched in February 2014 by ECOWAS, 'Zero Hunger in West Africa' aims to eradicate hunger by 2020.

Lesson #4: Finance Social Protection with the National Budget

In Burkina Faso, only 3% of projected budget allocations to finance the National Plan for the Rural Sector over the 2011-2015 period are devoted to 'preventing and managing food and nutrition crises.' In this country, donors are said to contribute up to 80% of social transfers, according to the World Bank. Inversely, Lesotho—whose GDP is less than that of Burkina Faso—has decided to finance its (non-contributory) pension programme for the elderly on its own. In Brazil, the 'Zero Hunger' strategy is financed from the state budget with a minor contribution from international partners. One should remember that when it was launched, Brazil was in a very unfavourable situation (debt at 57% of GDP and 12% inflation).

Lesson #5: 'Penalise' Food Insecurity

In Brazil, the right to food has been part of the Constitution since 2010 as a mandatory government priority. A law that came into force in 2006 precisely defines the concept of family farming, making it possible to determine beneficiaries of support programmes. In South Africa, the right to food and the right to social assistance are written into the Constitution and the population can refer to them in the courts. The right to the Child Support Grant (family benefits) was included in national law. According to some experts, these legal elements have formed the essential foundation for broad and effective implementation of this programme. In West Africa, the right to food is written into the constitutions of some countries, such as Niger, but there are no structures to demand application of this right and bring suits before the courts. The status of farmers, the definition of family farming and the registration of farms are, what is more, far from clearly defined. Let us note, finally, that it is more difficult to force donors and NGOs to be accountable for programme implementation than the state.

In South Africa, the Child Support Grant covers approximately 11 million children. This cash transfer programme has considerably reduced hunger and poverty.

Lesson #6: Allow Active Mobilisation by Civil Society

It was after a long fight that Brazilian civil society obtained a reform of governance guaranteeing its participation in the 'Zero Hunger' strategy. A National Food and Nutrition Security System (SISAN) was set up, notably integrating a National Conference on Food and Nutrition Security (which associates thousands of representatives of different categories of stakeholders meeting every four years to determine strategy orientations) as well as a body for dialogue and coordination between the public authorities and civil society at different territorial levels. On the national level, the National Council for Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA) is a consultative body presided over by civil society, from which two thirds of its members are drawn. In South Africa, the rapid growth in demand for family benefits and the loosening of allocation criteria (age limit, resource conditions, identity papers) were made possible thanks to campaigns conducted by civil society: awareness raising, research, court actions against the state. In West Africa, civil society has until now been very little involved in formulating existing programmes.

Lesson #7: Involve Farmers' Organisations

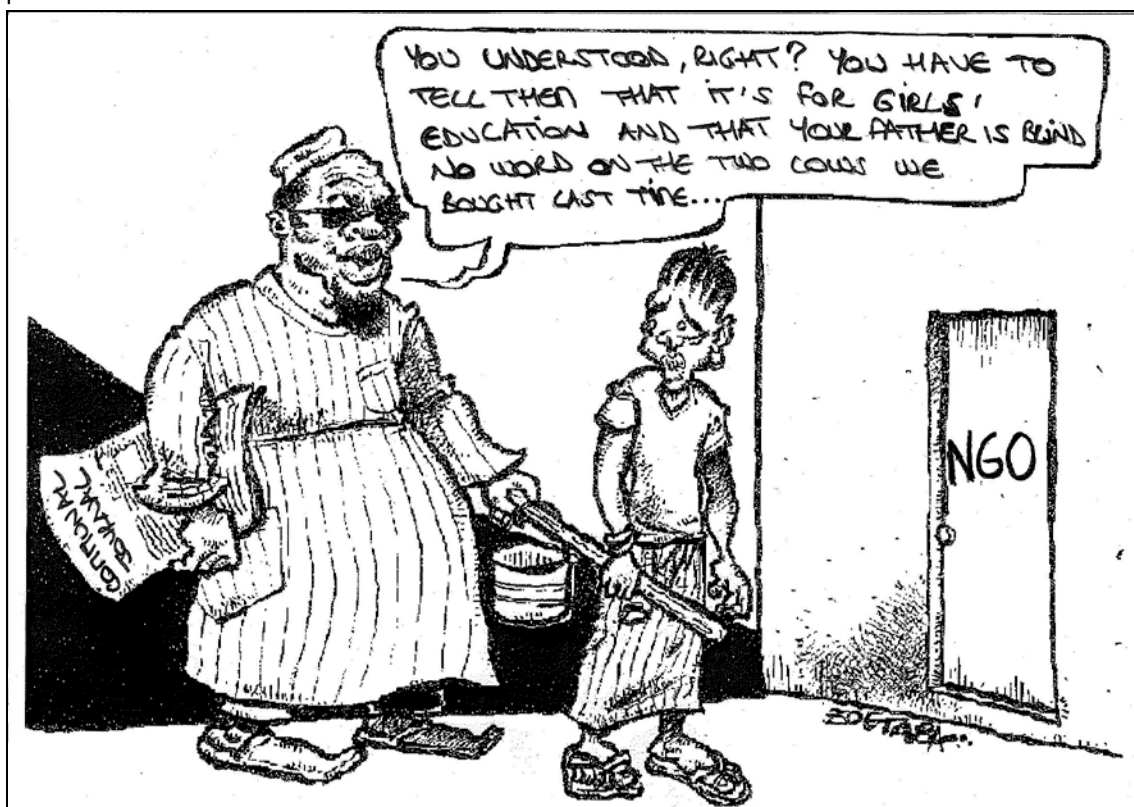
'FOs are still little involved in the debate on social protection. We need to ensure that it covers a guaranteed minimum price for farmers' (Kalilou Sylla, executive secretary of ROPPA).

In Brazil, farmers organisations (FOs) are represented in the various bodies monitoring and implementing the 'Zero Hunger' strategy on the municipal, regional and national levels. They also play a supporting role for farmers, helping them get organised to participate in programmes. In West Africa, FOs have not truly mobilised on these issues. Yet, the Brazilian example shows that it is possible to reconcile the 'social' approach with the 'production-oriented' approach to fighting food insecurity by allowing family farmers to benefit from social protection for food security. The various programmes promoting family farming in Brazil (*see table*) have brought the rate of poverty among family farmers down from 41% in 2003 to 24% in 2009. The loans granted to them have increased eightfold and farm incomes have increased by 58%. In West Africa, some interventions, such as public purchase contracts with small farmers work to the same end and have the

support of FOs. The 'Zero Hunger in West Africa' strategy insists on the need to reconcile these two approaches, designing social protection 'with a productive dimension'.

Lesson #8: Think Carefully About Targeting

The various experiences with social protection to fight food insecurity programmes show that there are many ways to target the beneficiaries of interventions. They all have certain advantages and disadvantages (see *summary brief #3*). These experiences show that targeting is not neutral and can—beyond problems of inclusion errors (give to people who do not need it) and exclusion errors (not give to people who do need it)—present risks of tension within communities, which can potentially cause policy makers to hesitate. Faced with these risks, the targeting criteria and methods must be adapted as well as possible to the contexts considered.



Further Reading

Social Protection for Food Security, a report by the HLPE (2012)

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/018/me422e/me422e.pdf>

Brazil's 'Zero Hunger' Strategy, an Inter-Réseau Développement Rural briefing (2012)

http://www.inter-reseaux.org/IMG/pdf/Note_FaimZe_ro_Sept2012_EN_vp.pdf

Towards local-level food security in West Africa: 'Zero Hunger in West Africa', an ECOWAS Commission strategy paper (2012)

http://www.inter-reseaux.org/IMG/pdf/Faim_Zero_EN.pdf

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