

## Social Protection in Fragile States: Lessons Learned\*

Paul Harvey, Overseas Development Institute

- Mechanisms – how to expand the range of instruments available for social protection in fragile states?
- Financing – how to provide longer term, more harmonised and predictable funding for social protection in fragile states?
- Actors and delivery capacity – which actors or combination of actors could deliver social protection at scale in different contexts of fragility (governments, NGOs, UN agencies, private sector)?

### Introduction

This paper examines the key issues around options for social protection in fragile states, drawing on a longer analytical report. It argues that the objectives for social protection in fragile states are essentially the same as in development contexts and that what is needed is adapting instruments, financing and delivery capacity to cope with fragility. It suggests three essential challenges:

The current situation in fragile states is far from ideal. Financing is short-term, unpredictable and not harmonised, delivery capacity is limited and, until recently, food aid has been the dominant response mechanism. This paper attempts to set out options which might enable international assistance for social protection to move beyond this status quo to deliver longer term, more predictable financing, for an appropriate range of actors to provide a wider range of social protection instruments.

The growing interest in social protection may provide an avenue for moving forward what has become a stagnant debate about the appropriate roles of relief and development actors in fragile states. As the need for social protection responses to chronic poverty becomes increasingly accepted there might be opportunities to expand welfare safety nets during periods of crisis to help people to deal with shocks. There may also be opportunities to develop projects that began as emergency interventions into longer-term social protection programmes.

---

\* The opinions expressed and arguments employed in this paper are the sole responsibility of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect those of the OECD or the governments of its member countries.

***Why is the topic important for promoting pro-poor growth?***

A third of the world's poor live in countries where the state lacks either the will or the capacity to engage productively with their citizens to ensure security, safeguard human rights and provide the basic functions for development. Supporting fragile states to deliver basic social protection to their citizens could play an important role in promoting pro-poor growth in a number of ways.

Social protection is increasingly being seen as an appropriate and affordable response to address long-term poverty and vulnerability. There is a growing recognition by international donors and national governments that long-term welfare safety nets may be a key component of social protection strategies and that they may themselves have positive impacts on growth and development. Social protection has also been presented as an agenda that can strengthen the legitimacy of the state by allowing it to re-shoulder responsibilities for ensuring the basic survival of its citizens and so contribute to reducing political fragility and reducing the risk of a lapse back into crisis. Social protection can have the dual objective of addressing both economic and social risk and vulnerability. Darcy (2004) points out that in conflict and post-conflict contexts, the social protection agenda must be seen as part of a wider human security agenda that encompasses protection from intimidation and coercion.

**Analytical framework**

There are a range of conceptual frameworks used in debates around social protection. Devereux and Wheeler (2007) discuss five; the World Bank's social risk management framework, transformative social protection, asset thresholds, the POVNET approach and the universal social minimum. We argue that it isn't helpful to come up with another framework for social protection that is particular to fragile states. What is needed is to think through the particular challenges for social protection in different fragile state contexts.

Table 5 uses the transformative social protection concept to highlight some of these challenges. This explicitly frames humanitarian aid as a subset of social protection rather than a separate category. In practice humanitarian aid is often seen as different from social protection and policy is framed in terms of moving from a short term relief focus to a longer term social protection agenda. However, there is nothing in any of the definitions of social protection that would appear to form a sensible basis for excluding and indeed it is arguably one of the central planks of any set of, 'public actions that enable people to deal more effectively with risk and vulnerability to crises and tackle extreme and chronic poverty' (DFID, 2006b).

**Table 5. Social protection in fragile states**

Categories of social protection	Types of projects	Issues in Fragile States	Examples in Fragile states
Protection	Safety nets and social assistance Disability benefits Single parent grants Social pensions Fee waivers on health and education Child / orphan grants	Long term safety nets rarely in place Pre-crisis forms of social assistance may have collapsed but sometimes remain (e.g. Cash transfers continued to around 60,000 households in Iraq in 2003)	Food aid usually delivered by humanitarian actors often for many years but on the basis of year by year appeals so can't be planned long-term Cash transfers just beginning to be seen as an alternative to food aid Re-emerging interest in longer term safety nets (e.g. PSNP) but limited practical experience to date
Preventive	Social insurance – contributory pensions, health insurance, unemployment benefits	Again vestiges of old systems may be in place but rarely survive fragility	Interest in potential of insurance both at a micro level as a complement to micro-finance and at a national level through weather indexes and catastrophe bonds.
Promotive	Livelihood enhancing programmes – microcredit, public works	Emergency examples such as seed provision but these are often small scale and with concerns over impact and effectiveness	Seeds, tools and other input programmes. Cash and food for work Income generation programmes
Transformative	Advocacy, sensitization, rights campaigns	May be particularly important in fragile states where rights are more likely to be abused	Advocacy around protection Rights based approaches to programming Human rights advocacy

Key Controversies – competing or complementary principles

The terms of reference for this paper asked; ‘what underlying principles of engagement could donors follow in reaching the poorest people in fragile states through social protection?’ There are several sets of overlapping principles that could govern donor engagement in social protection in fragile states, which include the OECD principles for engagement in fragile states; the DAC endorsed good humanitarian donorship principles and the Paris and Rome declarations on aid effectiveness (OECD, 2005; OECD, 2007; GHD, 2003). Social protection does not have a similarly clearly delineated set of principles but does perhaps have underlying principles informing the way in which it is being framed in current discourse. Whether or not these principles are competing or complementary represents a key controversy around approaches to social protection in fragile states.

Humanitarian principles (as expressed in GHD) are often seen as solely applicable in humanitarian crises and therefore as ceasing to be applicable at some hard to define point when a fragile state is no longer a humanitarian crisis and developmental principles kick in. The problem with this is that transitions are rarely so neat, humanitarian needs continue and humanitarian and developmental principles need to be simultaneously respected, not least by donor governments that have made clear commitments to each of these sets of principles. It is therefore important to explore possible tensions between these principles.

The greatest potential tension is between the focus on state building and integration between political, security and development objectives within the fragile states agenda and the commitment to neutrality and independence within the humanitarian agenda. Relief and social protection are often framed in opposition to each other because it is assumed that relief is state avoiding and short term in contrast to social protection which has a longer-term perspective and is most appropriately delivered by the state. Humanitarian actors see themselves as trying to maintain space for independent and neutral humanitarian action which can continue to deliver lifesaving assistance in contexts where conflict is still ongoing (as in Afghanistan), where humanitarian needs are still acute and there is a risk of return to conflict (as in southern Sudan) or where states are blocking access to vulnerable populations (Somali Region in Ethiopia). Development actors, however, following the OECD fragile states principles are often focussed on 'state building as a central objective' in ways that may make maintaining independence and neutrality difficult. Navigating this dilemma is therefore central to any attempt to move from a humanitarian focus to a broader social protection agenda in fragile states.

**Table 6. Complementary or Competing Principles**

<p>The OECD outlines ten Principles for <b>Good International Engagement</b> in Fragile States and Situations (OECD 2007):</p> <p>Take context as the starting point</p> <p>Do no harm</p> <p>Focus on state-building as the central objective</p> <p>Prioritise prevention</p> <p>Recognise the links between political, security and development objectives</p> <p>Promote non discrimination as a basis for inclusive and stable societies</p> <p>Align with local priorities in different ways in different contexts</p> <p>Agree on practical co-ordination between international actors</p> <p>Act fast ... but stay engaged long enough to give success a chance</p> <p>Avoid pockets of exclusion</p>	<p>The <b>Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative</b> comprises a set of objectives, definitions and principles for humanitarian action agreed by a group of donors in 2003 and endorsed by the DAC.</p> <p>Humanitarian action should be guided by the principles of humanity, impartiality, and neutrality, independence.</p> <p>Respect international humanitarian law, refugee law and human rights.</p> <p>Reaffirm the primary responsibility of states and strive to ensure flexible and timely funding.</p> <p>Allocate funding in proportion to needs.</p> <p>Involve beneficiaries in humanitarian response.</p> <p>Strengthen the capacity of countries to prepare for, mitigate and respond to humanitarian crises.</p> <p>Provide humanitarian relief in ways that are supportive of recovery and long-term development</p>	<p><b>Paris Declaration</b> on aid effectiveness</p> <p>Ownership – partner countries exercise effective leadership over their development strategies and coordinate development actions</p> <p>Alignment – donors base their overall support on partner countries national development strategies, institutions and procedures</p> <p>Harmonisation – donors' actions are more harmonised, transparent and collectively effective</p>	<p><b>Social Protection Principles?</b></p> <p>These are not yet well defined but might include:</p> <p>A focus on the primary role of the state in delivery.</p> <p>A focus on coverage and effective targeting.</p> <p>A long term approach focused on sustainability in terms of financing and delivery capacity.</p> <p>A focus on rights and addressing social inequalities within social protection programmes</p>
---	---	--	--

We argue in this paper that whilst these tensions are real, developmental and humanitarian principles are not necessarily contradictory. Humanity (a central focus on saving lives and alleviating suffering) and impartiality (aid according to need without discrimination) are principles that should be shared by developmental actors.

A focus on humanity might make it less acceptable to downplay humanitarian needs in a focus on statebuilding or security objectives at the expense of strategies to alleviate immediate suffering. A commitment to impartiality should be consistent with the fragile states principle of avoiding exclusion and promoting non-discrimination and would mean focussing on questions of coverage and access and on areas where state control remains weak or contested.

Neutrality and independence are too often taken as shorthand for disengagement from state structures rather than as necessitating principled engagement with states. The Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative and UN resolutions recognise that the primary responsibility for assisting and protecting their citizens during times of disaster rests with the affected state. Not taking sides in a conflict and maintaining independence can be perfectly consistent with working through government structures to provide services where there remains state willingness and capacity.

Development actors should be as committed as humanitarians to not taking sides in a conflict and for the same reasons as humanitarians; that if they are seen as supporting one side or the other it will threaten their ability to provide support to civilians on both sides of a conflict. There is also just as strong a need for an independent civil society able to be critical of government and donors and hold them to account in development contexts as humanitarian ones. The OECD DAC fragile states principles talk about ‘recognising the links between political, security and development objectives’ but the problem with positive sounding commitments to greater integration or coherence is that development or humanitarian objectives are in practice likely to be subordinated to more powerful political and security objectives. A focus on the independence of developmental objectives as desirable in their own right might help to combat the inappropriate instrumentalisation of development assistance for political and security ends.

#### **Principle in Nepal**

The space to operate programmes (whether relief or development) in a conflict depends on the consent of the warring parties and the host communities. In Nepal, development agencies are facing increasing difficulties from the parties to the conflict that may hamper or limit access, while at the same time protection needs for communities are increasing

One response to this challenge by the international community and its implementing partners has been the adoption of Basic Operating Guidelines as a statement of both the standards and principles by which agencies in Nepal operate. The Guidelines are innovative in that, unlike the majority of codes of conduct in other countries they were drawn up in a conflict environment where there are no immediate humanitarian needs or large-scale relief programmes.

*Source : Armon et al. 2004: 25*

The other aspect of this debate that needs to be unpicked more carefully than it has been to date is the OECD commitment to ‘state-building as the central objective’. Few would argue that having legitimate and accountable states able to fulfil core functions is a desirable long-term objective in fragile states but that rather begs the question of whether or not you would want to build the capacity of particular government regimes at any given moment. How to engage in a principled fashion with states that are failing to meet the basic needs of their citizens and may indeed be complicit in abuses of human rights law and, in extreme cases crimes against humanity, is clearly hugely difficult. A focus on principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence may help in navigating these dilemmas. The ultimate objective of state building might at times require distance from particular regimes and advocacy, influence and political pressure on the part of international actors to encourage states to live up to their responsibilities to protect and assist their citizens in the face of crisis.

Social protection does not have a clearly articulated and agreed set of principles in the same way that humanitarian aid and the fragile states agenda have developed. Some of

the social protection principles suggested in Table 6 are straightforwardly compatible with humanitarian and fragile states principles. The focus on coverage and targeting is clearly compatible with principles of impartiality and avoiding exclusion. The focus on the primary role of the state and governance fits well with the fragile states agenda around state building. The focus on rights and addressing social inequalities fits well with commitments to non-discrimination and the increasing focus of humanitarian actors on rights based approaches and protection challenges (O’Callaghan and Pantuliano, 2007).

A dilemma arises around the question of sustainability and what the term means in contexts of fragility. Safety nets had long been seen as unsustainable and unaffordable for developing countries but social protection is increasingly being seen both as potentially affordable within budget constraints and as something that donor governments can make long term commitments to (Devereux and Wheeler, 2007). In practice, in highly aid dependent fragile states sustainability in terms of a government’s ability to finance its own social services is often a distant objective and is likely to require long-term donor commitments.

### **Good practice: What do we know so far and still need to know?**

There is a need to be cautious in making judgements about good practice as this is a newly emerging theme and practice remains limited. There is also a huge lack of rigorous evaluation or evidence based research on which to make judgements on whether practice is good or bad. There is a large amount that we do not know and a clear agenda for further research and learning around these issues. Nevertheless, there is some emerging experience which this paper describes in the next three sections around new instruments for social protection, innovations around financing and the actors involved in delivery of social protection.

#### ***Instruments for social protection in fragile states***

The full range of social protection instruments available in wider development contexts should be considered in fragile states. Rather than restricting the range of instruments available the focus should be on adapting them to contexts of fragility and applying them in a manner consistent with core humanitarian and development principles. Arguably, part of the limitation of humanitarian programming in fragile states has been the use of too narrow a range of instruments and a failure of imagination in programming.

In fragile states humanitarian aid has often been the primary mechanism for providing social protection. Where the state has been unable to provide basic services for its citizens international humanitarian actors have taken on this role and this has long served as an instrument of last resort in fragile states. However, there are a number of limitations with humanitarian aid, not least because it is primarily delivered by international actors, there are concerns that it undermines national and local capacities and could thus be detrimental to notions of state-building and the political contract between a state and its citizens (De Waal, 1998). Furthermore, the reach of humanitarian actors is often limited and the resources they have at their disposal inadequate, so needs may not be met adequately. In long-running crises, what is designed as a short-term instrument for meeting acute needs ends up as an inadequate instrument for meeting long-term needs. In recognising these limitations of humanitarian aid it is important not to lose sight of its very real strengths. Humanitarian actors have shown a consistent ability to deliver a range

of services even in the midst of conflicts and their implementation capacity and expertise is clearly invaluable.

There has been growing interest in and experience with the role of cash transfers in both emergency relief and longer term social protection. Cash transfers have been successfully delivered in fragile states such as Somalia, Afghanistan and DRC, even where conflict was still ongoing (Harvey, 2007). Until recently, relief provision has been dominated by the in-kind provision of assistance in the form of food aid, seeds, shelter materials and non-food items (buckets, blankets). Concerns about the feasibility of cash have centred on whether it would be harder to target, more prone to corruption, inflationary in weak markets, disadvantageous to women and impossible to deliver safely in conflict environments. Recent experience has suggested that these concerns do not necessarily materialise, even in fragile states. Cash transfer projects have not been inflationary and women have been able to have a say in how money is spent. Corruption and insecurity clearly remain important concerns but cash has not been more prone to corrupt diversion than in-kind assistance even in conflicts. Evaluations of cash transfer projects have also suggested that cash can be more cost effective than in-kind assistance, can create positive multiplier impacts in local economies and it provides people with greater choice which can create opportunities for productive investment and spending on key social services. Recipients have overwhelmingly been found to spend cash sensibly on immediate basic needs and, if more generous amounts are provided, on critical investments in livelihoods and in accessing health and education services. The fact that cash transfers have been successfully used in some emergency contexts does not mean that they will always be appropriate. What is needed is the capacity to make informed decisions about what range of mechanisms should be used in delivering social transfers.

Interventions that could be included within a social protection umbrella focussed on agricultural production remain extremely important where agriculture based livelihoods continue to support the majority of the population. Traditionally, agriculture interventions in fragile states have tended to remain narrowly focussed on distributions of seeds and tools often with large question marks over their appropriateness (Levine and Chastre, 2004; Longley, 2006). Seed vouchers and fairs have recently been used as alternative to in-kind seed distributions and cash support may also enable local purchase of seed (Bramel *et al.*, 2004). There are, however, a much wider range of possible interventions both in terms of projects and policies that could be used to support agricultural livelihoods which would be potentially applicable in fragile states such as input subsidies, interventions to support markets and infrastructure development (Sabates, Wheeler *et al.*, 2007). Some of them may be particularly appropriate. For example, investments in infrastructure such as irrigation and feeder roads and in support to markets may be particularly needed in post conflict contexts where infrastructure has been badly eroded and markets weakened.

Subsidies, whether of food or agricultural inputs have been largely off the donor policy agenda for some time but recent experience with an agricultural inputs subsidy in Malawi has been very positive. Evaluations suggest that the subsidy led to an additional 600-700 000 tonnes of maize were produced in 2007, once the impact of rainfall was controlled for. Two million households were able to buy fertiliser at less than a third of the retail price using private sector as well as state owned outlets for distribution (DFID, 2007a; Dorward, 2007). National, government led subsidy programmes may well be beyond the capacity of many fragile states but as with other social protection instruments, subsidies may still be possible with international support and may be



particularly relevant in kick-starting agricultural production in post-conflict environments.

Public policy measures to reduce the burden of critical expenditure items on household income are an instrument that has seldom been used but has significant potential (Save the Children UK, 2006). An example is policies to waive fees for health and education or to expand free schooling and health care which are often major items of expenditure for poor households.

There is increasing interest in the possible use of insurance mechanisms as a form of response to food insecurity and disasters. Micro-finance providers have been examining the possibility of extending their product range to provide micro-insurance and at a more macro level some governments have taken out ‘catastrophe bonds’ against extreme weather events and UN agencies have been piloting weather based insurance indexes (WFP, 2005). Market based options contracts may present another policy option. There has also been discussion, but little practical experience, around the potential for micro-finance in conflicts and fragile states (Miamiian, 2005).

Interventions to support pastoralist livelihoods and livestock production such as destocking and fodder provision are another area where there is considerable scope for expansion and innovative programming (Catley *et al.*, 2005; Alinovi *et al.*, 2007). Abede *et al.* (2007, forthcoming) describe a commercial de-stocking intervention which was piloted in southern Ethiopia during the drought in early 2006. The intervention led to the estimated purchase of 20,000 cattle valued at USD 1.01 million. In terms of aid investment, the approximate benefit-cost ratio was 41:1 for the intervention.

There may also be a need for specific support for particular vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, the elderly and orphans and other vulnerable children. Programmes that provide support to people living with HIV/AIDS through home based care may be one example of a possible intervention that builds on community support mechanisms. In Zimbabwe, for instance, the Protracted Relief programme support home based care programmes and WFP provides food aid integrated with other forms of support (DFID, 2007c).

This section has attempted to provide some examples of the wide range of instruments potentially available within the broad umbrella of social protection. There is a need to consider a wide range of possible instruments in each context and not narrow programming options down unnecessarily. Safety nets or social assistance, whether in the form of cash or food, may need to be complemented with interventions aiming at supporting productive activities and markets.

## ***Financing***

Ensuring adequate and sustainable financing for social protection in fragile states remains difficult with states own resources constrained and donors reluctant to enter into long-term commitments. There is, however, a clear need to attempt to move away from inadequate, short-term and project specific funding and provide longer term, more harmonised and predictable funding for social protection.

Being able to deliver longer term, more predictable funding would provide key advantages for both aid agencies and disaster affected populations. For aid agencies, a move to longer term funding would enable them to plan and programme much more strategically, to invest more in staff skills and capacity and make longer term

commitments to communities and local partners. For disaster affected populations, a key advantage of longer term funding would be predictability. One of the important drawbacks of humanitarian assistance is that it is often unreliable. If longer term social protection could be delivered more predictably households would be able to plan it within their own livelihood strategies and coping mechanisms.

Donor governments have attempted to harmonise in part through the development of new financing mechanisms to provide support in fragile states. As Leader and Colenso (2005) argue; ‘various ways of pooling funds such as multi donor trust funds and joint programmes can promote a more programmatic and long term approach to service delivery (Leader & Colenso, 2005). Project based approaches can also provide predictable funding over time and incorporate varying degrees of alignment to government systems. In Zimbabwe, DFID’s Protracted Relief Programme was established in part as an alternative to annual relief programmes with food aid as the main component and funds 12 major NGOs on a multi-annual basis for a diverse range of activities aimed to boost food production, improve access to water and provide care for the chronically ill (DFID, 2007b). The Productive Safety Nets Programme in Ethiopia is another example of an attempt to move from annual relief appeals to more multi-annual and predictable financing of social protection.

Social funds (providing support to communities for small projects) have been seen as possible social protection instruments. Social Funds have enabled the World Bank to respond rapidly in the aftermath of natural disasters in part due to simplified procedures, good management and operational autonomy and the approach itself which takes advantage of a wide range of available implementation capacity. Where social funds are already in place, teams can act immediately in concert with municipal governments and other agencies to prioritise and implement projects (World Bank, 2007). In the aftermath of the earthquake the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund responded quickly through the establishment of a Disaster Relief Centre by day two and the reallocation of USD 5 million from existing project funds to relief activities. In Madagascar, an existing Community Development Project added a social protection component focussed on public works in urban communities which was used as a risk mitigation mechanism following cyclones in 2004. A relief component was also added, procedures were simplified and beneficiary contributions waived or reduced in hard hit areas. Emergency activities were contracted out to UNICEF and technical audits were carried out during implementation to allow reorientation of procedures (Rakis 2006; Independent Evaluation Group 2006).

What emerging experience suggests is that there are a wide range of possible financial instruments that can be developed to provide more harmonised, predictable, multi-year funding in fragile states. Putting these sorts of programmes in place, however, would require longer term commitments from donors willing to fund multi-year programmes and so engagement from development actors as well as humanitarian departments often only able to make short-term commitments. Various approaches to providing more harmonised and joint funding such as multi-donor trust funds have potential but attention needs to be focussed on how they work in practice as well as supporting the general principle of harmonisation.

### ***Delivering social protection: Actors***

Providing any kind of social assistance requires delivery capacity in terms of planning, coordination and the actual delivery of inputs, cash, food, or goods to people.

Ideally, social protection should be provided by the state but the reality of fragile states means that either the state does not have the capacity to deliver such transfers, or donors are not willing to work with it for political reasons, or it does not have control over all its territory.

Where the state is incapable of or unwilling to engage in delivering social protection, international aid actors may take on more responsibility for social protection. It is in these contexts that humanitarian aid has usually been and remains the primary instrument for social protection. Where this is the case, longer term social protection is still needed, but would need to be delivered through non-governmental and UN actors. Approaches such as the Protracted Relief Programme in Zimbabwe provide examples of how donors can support international aid actors in ways that enable them to move beyond short term emergency appeals whilst maintaining a principled engagement with state structures (DFID, 2007). The Temporary International Mechanism in the Occupied Palestinian Territories provides another example (TIM, 2007; Grupo Sogges, 2007). An evaluation of the TIM concluded that it; ‘has been an innovative instrument capable in a very difficult and complicated environment, to quickly mobilise resources from a number of different donors and to target them efficiently to the most needy, at a time when political constraints impose that, in order to participate, potential donors must assure transparency and accountability which can be provided only by rigorous and complete fiduciary procedures’ (Grupo Sogges: 4).

Even if social protection is provided primarily through non-state actors there may still be a need to respect state sovereignty and to attempt to involve the government, where possible. One way of approaching this is shadow systems alignment, which aims to ensure that the capacity of the state to deliver in the future is not undermined. Shadow systems alignment, in the short-term, would organise aid delivery to be compatible with existing or future state structures rather than duplicating or undermining them. The long-term aim is for the state to provide these services (ODI, 2005).

In improving contexts, there may be enough state capacity or willingness for the state to play a central role and for donors to be willing to fund a state. Where this is the case, it is clearly preferable and can enable social protection to fulfil state building objectives. For example, an evaluation of the Social Development Fund in Yemen, which provides funding for a broad range of social development projects such as education, health and road building, concluded that; ‘it is contributing to the promotion of solid systems of governance that underscore state building.’ (Jennings, 2006: 6). In Afghanistan, the National Solidarity Programme, which provides block grants to Community Development Councils for social and productive infrastructure and services, has as its key objective strengthening community level governance in order to address the lack of social cohesion brought about by almost three decades of conflict and provides a vehicle for ‘re-building the trust between the central government and its citizens (NSP, 2007).

There is a need to be realistic about the delivery capacity of a state. In particular there is need to guard against moving from a situation where there is expensive and patchy but effective NGO delivery to one where the government is providing services in theory but in practice does not have the capacity. This can result in a collapse in entitlements as health clinics or schools stop functioning because people are not being paid or supplies such as drugs are not being delivered.

Where government capacities are limited it may still be possible to engage with relevant line ministries in the development of policy. The ministries responsible for social protection and welfare safety nets have often become relatively weak because of the lack

of investment in this field compared to ministries of health or education. Engaging relevant line ministries in debates about social protection policies may be part of the process of rebuilding some analytical and implementation capacity within governments to deliver social protection.

#### **Box 5. Protracted Relief Programme in Zimbabwe**

This DFID funded programme supports 12 major NGOs in a diverse range of activities aimed at boosting food production, improving access to water and providing care to the chronically ill. Technical support is provided by UN agencies international agricultural research centres.

Agricultural support interventions include targeted input distributions, seed multiplication, nutrition gardens and conservation farming. Block grants are provided to schools in exchange for fee waivers for orphans and vulnerable children. Support is also provided to home based care, savings and loans and a range of water and sanitation interventions.

DFID argues that this is an innovative programme because it:

- Is operating at a significant scale with almost 1.5 million people likely to be reached in 2007.
- In a situation of declining government services, NGOs are showing themselves able to deliver services on a large scale
- Interventions using simple technologies such as conservation farming, home based care and water pumps are having significant impacts.
- It demonstrates that it is possible to improve agricultural livelihoods despite pessimism about the sector.
- It utilises community based support mechanisms on a large scale.
- It combines local and international NGOs, UN agencies and local government in ways that encourages learning and cooperation.
- Learning support is designed into the programme through a Technical Learning Unit.

Samson and MacQuene (2006) argue that a diverse toolkit of instruments that tackle social protection, livelihoods protection and food security has proven valuable and is appropriate given the complex situation in Zimbabwe.

*Source* : DFID 2007b and c; Samson and MacQuene 2006

Where it is difficult to engage with central government departments due to lack of capacity, willingness or political differences it may still be possible to work with local governments in service delivery. In Zimbabwe the Protracted Relief Programme (Box 5) has significant involvement with government agencies at Provincial, District and village levels and some engagement from the agricultural research and extension agency within the Ministry of Agriculture. UN agency partners in the programme, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and UNICEF, have played a key role in liaising with the government at national level about the programme (Jones *et al.*, 2006). The multi-donor programme of support to orphans and vulnerable children through UNICEF and the multi-donor Expanded Support Programme, for HIV/AIDS, Prevention and Treatment, are both in line with the national HIV/AIDS strategy and are examples of how donors can respect and support government sovereignty even in extremely difficult policy environments. The Expanded Support Programme relies on UN agencies for implementation, and managed by a working group made up of government, donors, UN agencies and civil society (DFID, 2007d).

## Conclusion and policy implications for donors

The paper argues that existing social protection frameworks provide an appropriate starting point for addressing social protection in fragile states. What is needed is to think through the particular issues for social protection policies and programmes in different contexts of fragility. These centre round the need for principled engagement with states to find flexible ways of utilising a wider range of instruments, financing and actors to deliver social protection in contexts where it is desperately needed.

Donors are committed to both humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, independence and impartiality and the OECD principles for engagement with fragile states. This presents dilemmas around how to maintain independent humanitarian space and focus on state-building as the central objective. The paper argues that these are not necessarily incompatible. More work, however is clearly needed to look at how commitment to both sets of principles works in practice in particular contexts and in particular to unpick what a commitment to state building entails.

A commitment to the humanitarian imperative to act in the face of suffering implies a need for caution in moving away from relief whilst humanitarian needs are still present and trade-offs between short-term effectiveness in delivery against longer-term state building objectives. Impartiality, non-discrimination and avoiding exclusion both imply a need to focus on coverage and implementing social protection programmes on a large-scale and without excluding particular geographic areas or population groups. Independence and the fragile states principle of state building and to ‘align with local priorities in different ways’ implies a need for flexibility and adaptability in terms of the actors involved in delivering social protection. Where governments are unable or unwilling to be engaged or actively involved in widespread abuses of human rights relating to social protection then it is clearly sensible to work through international actors. Decisions about who to work with clearly need to be context and time specific and unavoidably involve political judgements about particular government regimes and their degrees of capacity and will. Even where working directly with and through the state is not possible, the long term objective needs to be to encourage states to live up to their responsibilities to protect and assist their citizens. Opportunities to move towards this may be possible with shadow alignment strategies and in working with line ministries and layers of local government where technical capacity remains.

Donor engagement in social protection is often framed about financing for projects and programmes. There may also, however, be important opportunities to engage in and influence policy debates about the appropriate role of social protection in fragile states. Many entry points are opening up for discussion and engagement of social protection as interest in social protection continues to move up the policy agenda for both national governments and international agencies. As noted in the introduction the evidence base around what works in practice in terms of different instruments, financing mechanisms and actors involved in social protection is very thin. One way that donors could play an important role in moving forward the policy debate would be by supporting more in-depth research into the implementation of different social protection policies and programmes in specific contexts.

Delivering social protection on a large scale is vital to both meeting needs more effectively and living up to principles of impartiality. Different financing mechanisms such as joint programmes and multi-donor trust funds may provide opportunities to operate on a larger scale but there is a need to be cautious about how they work in

practice in particular contexts. Fundamentally, increasing the scale of social protection is about greater resources and longer term multi-annual commitments of bigger funding in difficult environments. Whether social protection is delivered through international actors, governments in joint funding or project by project mechanisms, expanding coverage implies that more money is needed. Sustainability, in the sense of governments being able to take over the financing of social protection programmes through domestic revenues is probably a long term objective and donors need to be able to make long term commitments to financing social protection.

There's a need for caution in making recommendations relating to what is a new and emerging agenda where the evidence base remains thin but the Box 6 below might provide a starting point.

**Box 6. Recommendations on addressing social protection in fragile states**

Flexibility and adaptability are key in terms of actors, instruments and financing.

- There's a need to be pragmatic about working with a range of actors and to balance the desire to build state capacity with the need to maintain access to basic services and potentially life-saving assistance.
- There's a need to utilise a much wider range of possible social protection instruments within broad social protection strategies. For too long, aid in fragile states seems to have been constrained by a failure of imagination about what's possible.
- There are tensions between fragile states principles focussed on state-building and humanitarian ones focussed on independence and neutrality but donors have committed to both sets of principles and both need to be respected. Navigating these tensions means finding principled ways of engaging with states to both alleviate immediate suffering and move gradually towards longer term, sustainable capacity to deliver state-led social protection.

## *References*

- Abebe, D. *et al.* (2008), “Livelihoods impact and benefit-cost estimation of a commercial de-stocking relief intervention in Moyale district, southern Ethiopia”, *Disasters*, Vol. 32, No 2.
- Alinovi, L. *et al.* (2007), “Addressing Food Insecurity in Fragile States: Case studies from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Sudan”, Agricultural Development Economics Division, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).
- Armon, J. *et al.* (2004), “Service Delivery in Difficult Environments: the case of Nepal”, UK Department for International Development (DFID), London.
- Bramel, P., T. Remington, and M. McNeil (2004), “CRS Seed Vouchers and Fairs: using markets in disaster response”, Catholic Relief Services, Nairobi.
- Catley, A. *et al.* (2005), “Policies, Practice and Participation in Complex Emergencies: the case of livestock interventions in South Sudan”, Tufts University.
- Darcy, J. (2004), “Conflict and Social Protection: Social Protection in Situations of Violent Conflict and its Aftermath”, DFID, London
- Devereux, S and R. Sabates-Wheeler (2007), “Debating Social Protection”, Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Bulletin 38.3, University of Sussex, Brighton.
- De Waal, A. (1998), “Famine Crimes, Politics and the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa”, Indiana University Press.
- DFID (2006b), “Social Protection in Poor Countries”, Social Protection Briefing Paper Notes Series, No.1, DFID, London.
- DFID (2007a), “A record maize harvest in Malawi”, DFID, London, [www.dfid.gov.uk/casestudies/files/africa%5Cmalawi-harvest.asp](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/casestudies/files/africa%5Cmalawi-harvest.asp).
- DFID (2007b), “Zimbabwe Protracted Relief Programme Overview”, Briefing Note 1, DFID, London.
- DFID (2007c), “Zimbabwe Protracted Relief Programme Social Protection”, Briefing Note 3, DFID, London.
- DFID (2007d), “DFID’s Programmes in Zimbabwe”, Country Profiles, DFID, London.
- Dorward, A. *et al.* (2007a), “Rethinking Agricultural Subsidies in Poor Rural Economies”, A discussion paper, Future Agricultures, [www.future-agricultures.org](http://www.future-agricultures.org).
- GHD (2003), “Principles and Practice of Good Humanitarian Donorship”, Stockholm, [www.goodhumanitarianandonorship.org](http://www.goodhumanitarianandonorship.org).
- Grupo Sogges (2007), “Interim Evaluation of the Temporary International Mechanism, Final Report”, funded by the European Commission, Brussels.

- Harvey, P. (2007), “Cash based responses in emergencies”, Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) Report 24, Overseas Development Institute (ODI), London.
- Independent Evaluation Group (2006), “Hazards of nature, risks to development”, World Bank, Washington D.C.
- Jennings, M. (2006), “Social Fund for Development Republic of Yemen, Institutional Evaluation”, funded by DFID, London.
- Jones S. *et al.* (2005), “Zimbabwe Protracted Relief Programme: Output to Purpose Review”, <http://www.odi.org.uk>.
- Leader, N. and P. Colenso (2005), “Aid Instruments in Fragile States”, Poverty Reduction in Difficult Environments (PRDE) Working Paper 5, DFID, London.
- Levine, S. and C. Chastre (2004), “Missing the point: an analysis of food security interventions in the Great Lakes”, Humanitarian Practice Network, Network Paper 47.
- Longley, C., I. Christoplos and T. Slaymaker (2006), “Agricultural Rehabilitation: Mapping the Linkages between Humanitarian Relief, Social Protection and Development”, Humanitarian Policy Group, ODI, London.
- Miamidian, E. *et al.* (2005), “Surviving Disasters and Supporting Recovery: A Guidebook for Microfinance Institutions”, World Bank Hazard Management Unit, Working Paper Series, No 10, World Bank, Washington D.C.
- NSP (National Solidarity Programme) (2007), “National Solidarity Program, 10 Frequently Asked Questions”, Ministry of Rehabilitation and Rural Development, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.
- O’Callaghan, S. and S. Pantuliano (2007), “Protection in Action”, HGP Report 26, ODI, London.
- ODI (2005), “Harmonisation and Alignment in Fragile States”, Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Learning and Advisory Process on Difficult Partnerships, Senior-level Forum on Development Effectiveness in Fragile States, ODI, London.
- OECD (2005), Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, OECD, Paris  
[www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/parisdeclaration](http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/parisdeclaration).
- OECD (2007), “Fragile States: Policy Commitments and Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations”, DAC High Level Meeting 3-4 April 2007, OECD, Paris.
- Rakis, R. (2006), “Complementing Natural Disasters Management: The Role of Social Protection”, Social Protection Discussion Paper No. 0543, World Bank, Washington D.C.
- Samson, M. and K. MacQuene (2006), “Approaches to Social Protection: A Review of Donor-supported and NGO Implemented Social Protection Initiatives in Zimbabwe”, DFID, London.
- Save the Children UK (2006), “Paying with their lives: the cost of illness for children in Africa”.



TIM (2007), “Temporary International Mechanism: Key Facts”, European Commission, Brussels.

WFP (United Nations World Food Programme) (2005), *Pilot Development Project - Ethiopia Drought Insurance*, Executive Board, Projects for Executive Board Approval, WFP, Rome.

World Bank (2007), *“Strengthening local governance and promoting community development in Afghanistan”*, World Bank, Washington D.C.