

Social protection and climate change

Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals on
Universal Social Protection through
South-South and Triangular Cooperation

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Around the globe, climate change is affecting people's lives. Higher temperatures, droughts, flooding, sea level rise and other extreme weather events pose significant challenges to individual livelihoods and national economies. Whether recurrent or isolated, the need to protect people from the effects of climate change is of primary concern for many policy-makers, as is tackling its root causes. Climate change mitigation measures, in particular those to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, can create new "green" sectors of the economy. At the same time, individuals whose livelihoods are tied to less environmentally-friendly practices will require assistance as countries make the difficult choices to phase out certain industries. Measures to re-skill workers and protect those who lose their jobs will be necessary to ensure a just transition to greener economies and societies.

On one hand, social protection is a powerful tool to protect populations at greater risk of climate-related hardship and those adversely affected by efforts to transition to more sustainable industrial practices. Ensuring that these groups are given access to adequate social protection is important to offset losses in income or assets that could threaten livelihoods

and economic activity. On the other hand, everyday efforts to provide social protection also serve as opportunities to promote more sustainable production and consumption methods and mitigate the causes of climate change and environmental degradation. Some newer social protection measures seek to link social protection and GHG reduction efforts by providing the incentives and the means for greater environmental stewardship. At the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 21) held in Paris in December 2015, governments agreed on the need to provide social protection to populations affected by climate change and the use of social protection as a means to facilitate a just transition. However, more research is needed to document the links between social protection and climate change and provide adequate recommendations to countries.

Linking anti-poverty and pro-climate objectives has the potential to unlock powerful synergies favorable to ushering in a new era of sustainable practices while boosting incomes and productivity of the poor. The poor, along with other segments of the population, depend on the natural resources found in bio-diverse forests and oceans; the effects of climate change threaten the security of those



Social protection in the aftermath

In 2013, the Philippines was devastated by Typhoon Haiyan, killing over 7,000 people and affecting the livelihoods of 5.9 million workers. As a part of recovery efforts, the Integrated Livelihood and Emergency Employment Program (DILEEP) provided employment and entrepreneurship opportunities to displaced, disadvantaged and unemployed workers.

It provides short-term wage employment and facilitates entrepreneurship for people affected by natural calamities and economic shocks. Beneficiaries also enrol in social insurance, which works to expand coverage and increase contributions to various schemes.



livelihoods. Similarly, poor and non-poor alike who make their livings from unsustainable practices stand to suffer in a transition to more climate-friendly economies and societies unless proper safeguards are in place. While the poor are indeed vulnerable to the effects of climate change and, therefore, require protection efforts, it is unclear if they are significant contributors to climate change in a way that would make environmental compliance conditions or behavioral change incentives tied to social protection programmes an effective or fair method of combatting climate change effects.

The ILO has begun exploring ways in which social protection can be used to facilitate the transition towards greener economies and help its member States deliver on commitments to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Initial research looked at concrete experiences in Brazil, China, the Sahel region and the Philippines, where social protection programmes were working to protect people from the effects of climate change or from the negative fallout of pro-climate policies.

A series of case studies has been developed to explore the poverty-climate nexus in greater detail, looking at innovative means to pursue anti-poverty and pro-climate objectives simultaneously, while also recognizing the potential for policy conflicts and unintended outcomes. The examples include how social

protection programmes were introduced to offset the welfare impacts of fuel price hikes following subsidy reforms in some countries. In Brazil, a targeted cash transfer programme is now helping poor families in conservation areas carry out sustainable economic activities. Workers in China's logging industry have received unemployment benefits, training and placement services after national forest protections were enacted. In the Philippines, emergency employment interventions after Typhoon Haiyan served to expand social protection coverage. Finally, around the Sahel region, social protection systems are being adapted to the particular needs of many rural populations facing increased droughts and flooding as a direct result of climate change.

In each of these instances, governments are using social protection to protect populations suffering from climate change or adversely affected by structural, pro-climate economic reforms. However, additional research is still needed and new tools developed to inform policy design and support the implementation of "green" social protection, as well as to measure the net welfare impacts of such policies.

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