

5.3 NUTRITION SENSITIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION SCHEMES

Schemes supported by public policies and budgets, based on social contracts between the State and the citizens, implemented through diverse schemes

What problem is the solution trying to address?

The impact of a shock, whether caused by conflict, climatic, economic or political disruption always hits hardest those who are least able to cope. Individual financial resilience plays a critical role in determining whether people can cope, or whether they are required to make unsustainable demands on their assets, in turn incurring lasting impacts on their ability to recover. Financial resilience is also a critical factor in securing and sustaining access to nourishing food, protecting people from undernutrition, as well as diet related disease. Expenditure on food is often sacrificed in order to meet other forms of essential expenditure (e.g. housing costs or protection of assets) but this incurs immediate impacts on the health and wellbeing of household members, particularly those who have elevated nutritional needs.

As a result of the pandemic, the numbers of people experiencing acute hunger is estimated to have risen from 135million to 265million (ref) and inequalities in many countries (whether high, middle or low income) have widened. Yet even before the current crisis, poor diets linked to low income were evident in most countries of the world. Vast schemes have been operationalised by governments and charities across the world to respond to this crisis. Their success in protecting people from the impact of the pandemic is likely to have been closely dependent on the strength of the social protection system in place before the crisis hit.

What, in brief, is the solution?

Nutrition sensitive social protection schemes- These are long term programmes, funded by national budgets, which aim to strengthen the resilience of households to low or fluctuating income and help them to secure sufficient, nourishing food on an ongoing basis. By adopting a cash first approach these schemes support local markets with knock-on impacts on local economies, and empower recipients to use their resources in the best possible way to meet their current and future needs. Schemes can be designed to target groups of the population with elevated nutritional needs (e.g. children, pregnant or breastfeeding women, older people), or delivered in a manner which supports recipients to prioritise spending on nutritious foods (e.g. using conditionality or vouchers).

What was/ were the source(s) from which this solution emerged?

Survey form

How can this solution address that problem?

Nutrition social protection schemes require, in the first instance, political support. This requires political elites to be connected with citizens who experience food insecurity and to understand the reasons behind their situation. In many instances political elites are disconnected from citizens and popular narratives about the deserving and undeserving poor are rife. A critical element of the process of establishing social protection schemes should be hearing directly from people who are food insecure and consulting them on the optional design of the schemes.

These schemes require substantial financial support. The case for financial support often hinges on whether a case can be made for the schemes to have a long term impact on productivity by building human and economic capital. A range of approaches have been used by governments around the world. These include: (i) re-allocating public expenditures; (ii) increasing tax revenues; (iii) expanding social security coverage and contributory revenues; (iv) lobbying for aid and transfers; (v) eliminating illicit financial flows; (vi) using fiscal

and foreign exchange reserves; (vii) borrowing or restructuring existing debt and; (viii) adopting a more accommodative macroeconomic framework (see [here](#)). Schemes which place taxes on products which have high externalities (eg sugary drinks) may offer particular appeal for nutrition sensitive social protection. For example, in the UK the sugary drinks industry levy was used to finance breakfast clubs for children in deprived areas of the country.

FAO has developed helpful guidance on nutrition sensitive social protection [here](#).

Why does this solution align to the definition and criteria for a ‘game changing solution’ developed by the Summit?

Social protection schemes are already operating in many countries of the world but they are not always aimed at protecting the diets of those at greatest risk of malnutrition. Their primary impact is on increasing human capital and these impacts have been shown to be delivered at scale.

It is important that national governments finance and design the schemes in order to ensure their sustainability and to ensure the political challenges are addressed at the outset.

Nutrition sensitive social protection become game changing when it can support citizens to shift to healthy and sustainable diets and can be designed alongside measures to realign food production, supply and manufacturing and retail (the food system) to meet this demand.

What is the current and/or likely political support for this idea?

Long term financing of social protection requires defining the social contract between citizens and state. Many countries have social protection schemes already. The nature of the social contract varies and finance also varies ([ref](#)).

The extent to which schemes are designed with nutritional outcomes and human capital investment in mind varies. Few countries are designing these schemes as part of an ambition to shift towards healthy and sustainable diets.

Articulating the role which nutrition sensitive social protection plays in helping to ensure everyone can benefit from a diet which protects health, builds human capital and protects the natural environment will be important.

What do you think are the key actions required to address this solution?

These are clearly outlined [here](#)