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Exploring the Scope of Social Protection as an Instrument for Achieving the MDGs in Malawi

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A Case Study of Malawi

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Abbreviations

ECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
EDRP	Emergency Drought Recovery Program
EU	European Union
FISP	Farm Input Subsidy Programme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOM	Government of Malawi
IGPWPs	Income Generating Public Works Programmes
ILTPWP	Improved Livelihoods through Public Works Program
MASAF	Malawi Social Action Fund
MDGs	Millennium Development Goal
MDPC	Ministry of Development Planning and Cooperation
MEGS	Malawi Economic Growth Strategy
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MMSFP	Mary's Meals School Feeding Programme
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MPRS	Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
NSNP	National Safety Nets Programme
PAP	Policy Framework for Poverty Alleviation Programme
PRS/MDGs-LG	Poverty reduction Strategy/ Millennium Development Goals Learning Group
PWPs	Public Works Programmes
PWP-CCT	Public Works Program-Conditional Cash Transfer
SCT	Social Cash Transfer
SDA	Social Dimensions of Adjustment
SFP	School Feeding Programme
SPRINT	Special Program for Relief and Investment in Needy Times
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Programme
WFPSMP	WFP School Meals Programme
ZCTP	Zomba Cash Transfer Programme

I. Introduction

1.1 Social Protection and MDGs

Many African governments are struggling to meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets on poverty reduction. Most of the countries started with very high rates of poverty at the baseline, such that halving the proportion of the poor by 2015 remains a daunting challenge. The poor and vulnerable groups continue to experience shocks resulting from the international economic crises and exogenous factors and are experiencing difficulties in getting out of poverty. Most of the countries do not have well-designed safety net or social protection programmes which could have reduced vulnerability and increased resilience against socio-economic shocks. Yet, social safety nets or social protection programmes have been shown to have positive impact on poverty reduction and in reducing economic inequality.

Poverty is one of the development challenges in Malawi with more than half of the population described as poor. Most of these poor households experience shocks of different kinds including agricultural related, economic, health and demographic shocks. These shocks negatively affect the livelihoods of poor people in Malawi. Government of Malawi (GOM) and World Bank (2007) note that pervasive risks and vulnerability to shocks are the main causes of poverty in Malawi, resulting in significant movements of households out and into poverty even where incomes have not changed substantially. The main shocks that affect a large proportion of the poor include drought, price volatility, illness and deaths.

In order to reduce the severity of these shocks and poverty reduction, the Government of Malawi has been implementing different social protection programmes targeted at the poor and vulnerable groups. The social protection programmes that have been experimented and implemented in Malawi include cash-for-work or food-for-work or assets-for-work public works programmes, cash transfer programmes, food price control programmes, agricultural subsidies, school and supplementary feeding programmes. Currently, the main social protection programmes in Malawi are agricultural input subsidies, unconditional cash transfers, public works programmes and supplementary feeding programmes. Most of these programmes address issues of pervasive poverty, but have implications for other human capital outcome such as promoting education, good health and gender equality. It can be argued, therefore, that social protection programmes can help accelerate the achievement of MDGs on poverty and food security, education, health and gender. For instance, the cash transfer programme provides income support to vulnerable households, but households with children at school receive additional entitlement depending on the number of children. Hence, cash transfers in this case improve income poverty (MDG 1) while at the same time encouraging education (MDG 2) and promote health (MDG 4 to 6) through increased consumption.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The study was commissioned by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) to serve as a working paper for the ECA-initiated African Learning Group on Poverty Reduction Strategies and the Millennium Development Goals (PRS/MDGs-

LG). The purpose of this study is to contribute to the bridging of the knowledge gap and to propose policies for consideration and adoption by member states on the design of social safety nets/social protection schemes. The main outcome of the studies will be to propose policies mechanisms for deploying social safety nets as an additional instrument for accelerating progress in Africa to meet the targets of the MDGs in the context of MDGs-consistent or MDGs-based national development plans. The main objectives of the study are to:

- Discuss the constitutional, policy, legal and institutional frameworks of social protection schemes,
- Describe the main features of social protection instruments and their magnitude, including implementation modalities, and
- Assess the resulting outcomes from social protection schemes and how they contribute to achieving the MDGs.

1.3 Methodology

The study is based on desk research focusing on social protection programmes and the progress in achieving the MDGs. The data used for this review of social protection programmes comes from programme documents, government strategic documents, annual reviews of implementation of development strategies, annual reviews of progress of MDGs and impact evaluation studies of various programmes. In our analysis of the outcomes of social protection programmes, we link the progress that has been made or the likelihood of achieving MDGs and the potential contribution of social protection programmes. We do not seek to attribute the outcomes of social protection programmes to achievement of MDGs, but focus on their potential roles, particularly if the interventions were to be scaled up.

1.4 Outline of the Study

The report is organised into six chapters. The next chapter presents the country context and background focusing on socio-economic context and progress made on the MDGs in Malawi. The chapter also highlights the historical and policy context of social protection in Malawi, and the institutionalisation of social protection in development strategies and policies. Chapter 3 analyzes the typology of social protection programmes in Malawi by looking at the legal and institutional framework. Chapter 4 outlines the implementation framework of social protection interventions in Malawi including issues of targeting, derivation of benefits, registry of beneficiaries, financing arrangements and monitoring and evaluation. Chapter 5 reviews the impact of social protection schemes in Malawi and how they have contributed to incomes and poverty of vulnerable groups and to the achievement of MDGs. Finally, Chapter 6 offers concluding remarks and recommendations.

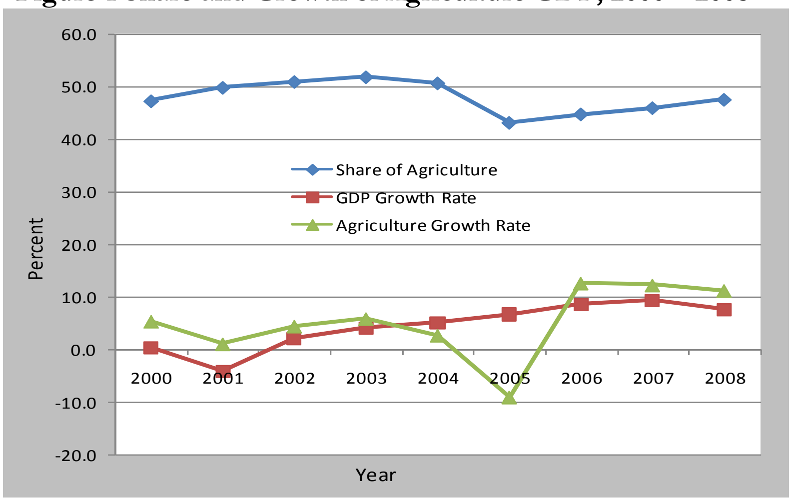
II. Country Background

2.1 Socio-economic Context

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world. It is estimated that 52 percent of the population in Malawi lives below the poverty line, with rural poverty estimated at 55.9 percent (GOM and World Bank, 2007). There is also high level of vulnerability of households particularly due to the agricultural nature of the economy, dominated by rain-fed cultivation. It is estimated that about 95 percent of households in Malawi experienced at least one economic shock between 2000 and 2005, with most households experiencing more than one type of shock (GOM, 2006). The most common shocks are agricultural related and include large increases in the price of food, lower crop yields due to flood or drought, illness or accident of household member, large fall in the sale price of crops and loss of livestock (GOM and World Bank, 2007). Since 2005 prices of fertilizers have increased dramatically in recent years (Dorward et al., 2010), and this has created difficulties for rural farmers to acquire fertilizers at prevailing market prices. The prices of the main staple crop, maize, have been volatile, within the season and across seasons. Such food price volatility can be damaging to economic activities and to the welfare of the poor who are also net maize buyers. With high levels of poverty and high incidence of shocks, social protection programmes become necessary to reduce the severity among the vulnerable groups in society.

The Malawian economy is dominated by the agricultural sector which contributes more than a third to gross domestic product (GDP) as Figure 1 illustrates. The manufacturing sector only contributes about 9 percent to Malawi GDP. The agricultural sector also generates about 90 of foreign exchange earnings and is the main source of livelihoods for more than 85 percent of households.

Figure 1 Share and Growth of Agriculture GDP, 2000 – 2008



Source: Computed by author

The performance of the economy is also closely linked to the performance of the agricultural sector, except between 2004 and 2005 when the agricultural sector experienced a decline while GDP continued to grow at impressive rates. The economy has recently been performing well in terms of growth of gross domestic product, particularly since 2004 where average annual growth rates have been above 6 percent per annum.

The positive growth rates are positively associated with the trends in poverty. Recent estimates on poverty show that poverty has been on the decline in Malawi since 2005. In 2007, it was estimated that 40 percent of the population in Malawi live below the poverty line, a decrease from 52.4 percent in 2005 and 45 percent in 2006 (NSO, 2007). The estimates of poverty also show that tremendous progress is being made in reducing poverty in the rural areas compared to the urban areas. Poverty declined only by 0.4 percentage point in urban areas while in rural areas poverty declined by 8.9 percentage points between 2005 and 2006.

2.2 Policy Context

Since Independence in 1964, the GOM has implemented various social support programmes. During the early years of Independence, the Government used market based instruments such as price controls and subsidies as a form of social protection in Malawi. For instance, prior to liberalisation of the economy, using the Control of Goods Act of 1968 and the Special Crops Act, most of the industrial goods and agricultural produce including maize were under price control in order to protect consumers from large fluctuations in prices across regions and seasons. Similarly, there was a universal subsidy on the prices of fertilizers until the late 1980s. However, the problem of the market based social protection policies was the poor targeting and those that benefited most from price controls and subsidies were not the most vulnerable households. The adoption and implementation of structural adjustment policies between 1980 and early 1990s, led to the erosion of these market based social protection policies in Malawi following the decontrol of prices and the removal of fertilizer subsidies in the late 1980s. As Slater and Tsoka (2007) note, the economic reform policies were dismantling the social protection system without replacing it with an alternative system. The only programmes that survived were targeted nutrition programmes and relief food aid.

There is general consensus that most economic reform programmes did not benefit the most vulnerable people in society leading to the criticism that structural adjustment programmes did not have a human face. Such criticisms led to a rethink of policies on how to protect the poor from the adverse effects of economic reforms. In 1990, Malawi started implementing the Social Dimensions of Adjustment (SDA) programme aimed at minimising the adverse effects of SAPs on the vulnerable groups of the Malawian society and strengthening the capacity for the integration of the poor in the national development planning process. According to Chipeta (1992), the initial objectives of SDA included: the strengthening of the institutional capacity to collect and analyse socio-economic data; developing a social support system through which the Government would tap the experience of non-governmental organisations (NGOs); salvaging and testing new ways for Government-NGOs' cooperation in economic development and poverty alleviation; and providing a small fund to be used to test, monitor, and evaluate various interventions with a scope for replication. One of the instruments used in the SDA was the provision of seed capital to government and non-governmental micro lending institutions for on-lending activities to the poor and vulnerable groups. A review of credit operations under the SDA project revealed that most of these were small operations and the institutions responsible for delivering micro credit had capacity constraints that resulted in ineffective delivery of services (Chirwa et al, 1996).

The policy developments in social protection emerged from the lessons from the SDA project and related projects and can be traced in five national development policy documents. First, in 1995, the Malawi Government published the Policy Framework for

Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP). The PAP identified vulnerable groups in Malawi and underscored the need to provide safety nets or social protection to such groups (GOM, 1995). The Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) was established in 1995 as one of the poverty alleviation instruments designed to address community social needs within the context of a wider safety net programme that included the agricultural 'starter pack' and food for work programmes. In the context of social protection, MASAF implemented public works projects in food insecure areas and other social support projects targeting vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

Secondly, in 1998, the government engaged in a consultative process which resulted in the publication of the Malawi Vision 2020 document in 2000 which captured the long-term aspirations of Malawians. With respect to social protection, the Vision 2020 recognized the need to identify vulnerable groups for targeted assistance and the implementation of programmes that enable poor households to access agricultural inputs (NEC, 2000). Within the context of the Vision 2020, the Government developed the National Safety Nets Strategy in 2001 (NEC, 2001) which culminated into the National Safety Nets Programme (NSNP) in 2002. The main objective of the NSNP was to reduce poverty and vulnerability of the most poor and vulnerable households. The NSNP identified four categories of vulnerability and four sub-programmes to address the respective categories of vulnerability. The four programmes included public works, targeted nutrition, targeted inputs and direct welfare transfers.

Thirdly, the government published the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy (MPRS) in 2002 whose strategies were expected to be implemented over three years. The MPRS incorporated the NSNP and divided the interventions into productivity enhancing safety nets such as targeted inputs and public works programmes and welfare support interventions such as direct transfers.

Fourthly, in 2003, the government started developing another development strategy which culminated into the Malawi Economic Growth Strategy (MEGS) published in 2004. In the later half of 2004, the MEGS was receiving more public attention than the MPRS, a development that created uncertainty about the development strategy the country was pursuing. While the MPRS focused on both economic and social sectors, the MEGS focus only on the economic sectors and private sector driven growth with very little articulation of distribution, and virtually excluded social protection.

Finally, by mid-2005 government started the process of developing a new strategy intended to address issues raised in both the MPRS and MEGS so as to come up with a coherent development strategy. This led to the publication of the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) in 2006. The MGDS moved from safety nets to social protection and risk management. The MGDS is also the policy document that has recognized the important role of social protection in promoting growth and development among the vulnerable groups. Social Protection and Disaster Risk Management is the second theme of the four themes in the MGDS (GOM, 2006). The strategies aim at decrease the risk of shocks and strengthen resilience to shocks and protecting those who become vulnerable. The long-term goal of social protection in the MGDS is to improve the life of the most vulnerable in society while in the medium term the goal is to increase assets of the poor to enable them participate in sustainable growth and contribute to poverty reduction.

Within the framework of the MGDS, the Government has drawn a National Social Support Policy (NSSP) with the overall goal of reducing poverty and enabling the poor to move out of poverty and vulnerability (GOM, 2009a). The NSSP seeks to provide welfare support to the poor; protect assets and improve reliance of poor and vulnerable households; improve the productive capacity and asset base of the poor and establish coherent and progressive social support synergies. The NSSP focuses on four themes: provision of welfare support, protecting assets, productivity enhancement, and policy linkages and mainstreaming.

2.3 Progress towards the MDGs

The development activities articulated in the MGDS in Malawi are oriented towards the achievement of Millennium Development Goals. The MGDS seeks to reduce poverty through sustainable economic growth and infrastructure development. The MGDS focuses on six key priority areas including agriculture and food security; irrigation and water development; transport infrastructure development; energy generation and supply; integrated rural development; and prevention and management of nutrition disorders, HIV and AIDS (GOM, 2006). One aspect of the MGDS is its clear articulation on how the focus on these six priority areas is to contribute to the achievement of the MDGs. The budget framework is also fully aligned to the MGDS, and by implication to the achievement of MDGs, by being framed in such a way that it reflects expenditure allocations to pro-poor sectors in Malawi (Waage et al, 2010).

According to GOM (2008b) Malawi has made remarkable progress in many areas and projects, such that some of the goals are likely to be achieved by 2020. In particular, progress has been registered in eradicating extreme poverty (MGD 1), reducing child mortality (MGD 4), combating HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases (MDG 6) with challenges remaining in improving maternal health, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowerment of women. In terms of achieving the MDGs, Malawi is likely to meet the 2020 target for MDG 1, 4, 6 and 7 but MDG 3 and 5 are unlikely to be met and MDG 2 is potentially feasible (GOM, 2008b).

III. Social Protection Schemes in Malawi

3.1 Constitutional and Legal Framework

Social protection in Malawi is not enshrined in the Constitution of Malawi. However, the existence of social protection programmes derives from the constitutional provision of the right to development and Government's commitments to address inequalities and social injustice. According to GOM (1994), Section 30 of the Malawi Constitution states that 'All persons and people have the right to development and therefore to the enjoyment of economic, social, cultural and political development and women, children and the disabled in particular shall be given special consideration in the application of this right'. It is further stated that the 'state shall take measures to introduce reforms aimed at eradicating social injustices and inequalities'. The Constitution also stipulates that the State has the responsibility to justify policies in accordance to the right to development.

Apart from the lack of constitutional provision for social protection in Malawi, the social protection programmes are being implemented without a legal framework. There is no law in Malawi that provides for social protection benefits for vulnerable groups and the programmes are implemented on *ad hoc* basis which means that such programmes are uncertain and unsustainable and implemented by the state and non-governmental organisations to ease the suffering of vulnerable groups in society.

The bases for social protection in Malawi are Government's development policies and strategies, sectoral policies and national budgets. The government's agenda on social protection started to explicitly emerge in the late 1990s in the Poverty Alleviation Programme and following the establishment of the Malawi Social Action Fund in 1996. Since then social protection programmes in various forms have been part of Government's strategies for addressing poverty and vulnerability in Malawi. Almost in all strategic development strategies that Malawi has produced over the past three decades, social protection interventions have featured prominently. Social protection is one of the six key strategic areas in the current Malawi Growth and Development Strategy. According to GOM (2006) the long-term goal of social protection is to improve the livelihoods of the most vulnerable households through increased assets of the poor. Although the MGDS is not a legally binding document, development programmes are expected to be aligned to the Government's priority areas. Nonetheless, the stipulation of social protection in development strategies compels governments to provide resources in the national budget.

In the case of Malawi, the institutionalization of social protection has been in the form of provision of social protection programmes in the national budget such as funds allocated to public works programmes and agricultural input subsidies. Such allocations form the basis for eligible citizens to demand social protection. For instance, between 2004 and 2008, the Malawi Parliament was dominated by the opposition and government found it difficult to have the budget approved in an opposition dominated Parliament. However, because the input subsidy programme has a significant provision in the budget and the fact that many people were entitled to the subsidy, citizens put a lot of pressure on Parliament to approve the budget.

In 2009, the Government drafted a Social Support Policy which provides a conducive environment for the coordination and implementation of social protection programmes by the state and non-state actors (GOM, 2009a).[1] The policy provides a framework for

[1] The draft policy has been submitted to Cabinet for approval. The policy essentially is a social protection policy. The first submission which was Social Protection Policy was rejected because its focus was on social protection which was understood by some to be more associated with cash transfers that have huge

designing, implementing, coordinating, monitoring and evaluation of social support interventions. The policy defines social support and the four thematic areas namely: provision of welfare support, protection of assets, promotion through productivity enhancement and policy linkages and mainstreaming. The instruments for achieving the objectives of social protection include implementation predictable transfers in terms of cash, food and shelter; implementation of long-term public works programmes whose wage is indexed to the cost of living; implementation of social insurance schemes; implementation of input subsidies or cash transfers; promotion of village savings and loan programmes; implementation of conditional cash transfers and ensuring that policy changes also benefit the poor (GOM, 2009a).

3.2 Overview of Social Protection Schemes in Malawi

Social protection in Malawi is defined in the context of social support which includes all public and private initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks, and enhance social status and rights of marginalized, with the overall objective of reducing ultra poverty as well as the economic and social vulnerability of poor and marginalised groups (GOM, 2009a).[2] According to Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004) this definition of social protection provides for social assistance to the extreme poor, social services, social insurance against risks and livelihood shocks and social equity.

Social protection instruments in Malawi are generally categorized into four: direct welfare instruments, productivity enhancing instruments, market interventions and transformative policy changes (Devereux and Macauslan, 2006; Kambewa, 2005; GOM, 2009a). Direct welfare instruments currently implemented in Malawi include conditional and unconditional cash transfers, school feeding programmes and food aid. Productivity enhancing programmes include public works programmes and fertilizer subsidies. Market interventions include control of price of maize, minimum prices for agricultural produce and maintenance of strategic food reserves. Table 1 presents a typology of formal social protection schemes by type of programme, instrument used and implementation agents, funding agencies and extent of coverage. Most of social protection schemes are implemented by the Government of Malawi and rely on a mix of donor and local funding. The extent of coverage varies from selected districts to all the 28 districts in Malawi.

3.2.1 Direct Welfare Programmes

There are three direct welfare schemes that have recently been implemented in Malawi at various levels: social cash transfer, Zomba cash transfer and the school feeding programme. The social cash transfer programme and the school feeding programmes cover a good number of districts and these programmes are currently implemented by the Government of Malawi. The Zomba Cash Transfer Programme (ZCTP) is a research-based conditional cash transfer programme that made school attendance a

budgetary implications in a country where a large proportion of the population are poor. In order to address this concern the policy was renamed from Social Protection to Social Support in which social support carried the definition of social protection.

[2] The definition of social support in Malawi adopted Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004) definition of social protection.

condition for the transfers. The ZCTP was a two-year programme but the lessons have implications on the role of social protection on education and health-related MDGs.

Table 1: Typology of Recent Social Protection Schemes in Malawi

Type of Programme	Type of Scheme	Providers	Funding	Coverage
Direct Welfare	1. Social Cash Transfer (SCT)	Government/UNCEF	Global Fund	7 districts
	2. Zomba Cash Transfer Programme	World Bank – Research Project	World Bank	1 district
	3. School Feeding Programmes	Government/WFP Mary Meals	WFP, GOM Scottish International Relief	20 districts
Productivity Enhancing	1. MASAF Public Works Programme	Government/Local Authority	World Bank, GOM	National
	2. Income Generating Public Works Programme (IGPWP)	European Union	European Union, GOM	17 districts
	3. Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP)	Government	GOM	National
Market Intervention	1. Maize Price Control	Government	GOM	National
	2. Minimum Crop Prices	Government	GOM	National

Source: Schubert and Huijbregts (2006), Dorward et al (2010), Baird et al (2010), GOM/EU (2009), Mary's Meals (2010), WFP (2009, 2010), Miller et al (2010)

3.2.1.1 Social Cash Transfer Scheme

The Social Cash Transfer (SCT) scheme is implemented by the Government of Malawi at the District Assembly level with technical assistance from the Ministry of Women and Child Development, the Ministry of Development Planning and Cooperation, and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The programme is funded by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The SCT started as a pilot in Mchinji district in 2006 and has since been extended to six other districts in Malawi. The main objectives of the SCT are to reduce poverty, hunger and starvation among labour constrained and ultra-poor households and to increase school enrolment and attendance among children of beneficiary households (Schubert and Huijbregts, 2006). The SCT is being implemented in 7 districts in Malawi including Chitipa, Likoma, Mchinji, Salima, Mangochi, Machinga and Phalombe. According to Miller et al (2010), the SCT is reaching 23 651 households and 92 786 beneficiaries. In the pilot district alone, the SCT is reaching 8 980 households receiving transfers in Mchinji district.

3.2.1.2 Zomba Cash Transfer Programme

Malawi has little experience with conditional cash transfers. One such programme was implemented between 2008 and 2009 in Zomba district as part of a research project that sought to understand the link between schooling, income and health risks among school girls. The Zomba Cash Transfer Programme (ZCTP) using a randomized experiment targeted school going girls and the beneficiaries received monthly stipends (girls as well as their guardians) provided that the girls attended school for at least 80 percent of the school days in a month. The ZCTP targeted 1 230 school girls and dropouts out of 3 805 girls that were identified in the baseline survey (Baird et al, 2010).

3.2.1.3 Supplementary Feeding Programmes

The school feeding programmes (SFP) in Malawi are implemented by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) with technical assistance from World Food Programme (WFP), Mary Meals, Millenium Village Zomba and Land O'Lakes in several districts in Malawi (WFP, 2009). It is estimated that these SFPs reached 30 percent of the 3 million children in primary schools in Malawi.

The WFP School Meals Programme (WFPSMP) started in 1999 as a pilot in one district but is now being implemented in 13 districts of the 28 districts in Malawi. The programme provides on site-feeding in selected primary schools throughout the year. In addition, the programme provides take-home rations between January and April for girls and orphaned boys in standard 5 to 8 conditional on attending 80 percent of the school days (WFP, 2009; 2010). The WFPSMP is reaching more than 642 000 children in 679 primary schools with its on-site meals and is providing take-home rations to more than 100 000 girls and 14 000 orphan boys.

Mary Meals School Feeding Programme (MMSFP) started in 2000 and is currently being implemented in 16 districts, 7 of which are not covered by the WFPSFP. Mary Meals provides two meals per day in school feeding under-6 centres and provide one meal in primary schools (Marys Meals, 2010). In 2009, the programme reached 190 schools and feeding more than 300 000 children (WFP, 2009).

3.2.2 Productivity Enhancing Programmes

Productivity enhancing social protection programmes include public works programmes and agricultural input subsidies. Public works programmes in Malawi are implemented by the Government of Malawi and the European Union in partnership with the local authorities, and the agricultural subsidy programme is implemented by the Government of Malawi.

3.2.2.1 MASAF Public Works Programme

The Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) PWP is implemented local authorities as a GOM national wide programme with funding from the MASAF. The programme is funded by credit from the World Bank. The programme dates from 1995 as an attempt to address the needs of the poor through community-driven development projects. The MASAF PWP is a safety net for poor households as a cash transfer strategy through labour-intensive public works that create employment. The main activities under the MASAF PWP include rehabilitation and construction of economic infrastructure such as access roads, rainwater harvesting structures, afforestation and environmental assets.

MASAF has also implemented special public works programmes including the Improved Livelihoods through Public Works Program (ILTPWP) in 2003, the Emergency Drought Recovery Program (EDRP-PWP) between 2002 and 2004 and the Public Works Program-Conditional Cash Transfer (PWP-CCT) between 2005 (Chirwa, 2007). The variations have mainly been in terms of motivation, targeting, the task rates, the wage rate and the duration of the employment. The EDRP-PWP and the PWP-CCT were implemented in response to the droughts that affected some parts of the country. The ILTPWP included value adding aspects such as savings and investments and was implemented as a livelihood promotion public works program. The PWP-CCT and the EDRP-PWP targeted food insecure households while the ILTPWP targeted most vulnerable households with the potential to engage in productive economic activities.

The MASAF PWP covers all the 28 districts in Malawi and is implemented by the District Assemblies as part of decentralisation and empowerment of the communities in the management of development projects. The menu of project activities in MASAF PWP include construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of earth roads, foot paths, bridges, rain water harvesting systems, land reclamation, sanitation and storm drainage, small scale irrigation and flood control systems; and those supporting environmental and agricultural activities through the establishment of re-forestation, afforestation, agro forestry, small-scale irrigation and flood control systems, terracing, sanitation and solid waste management, and compost manure making and hyacinth clearance. The programme has reached about 130 000 people in the targeted areas (GOM, 2009).

3.2.2.2 Income Generating Public Works Programme

The Government of Malawi/European Union (GOM/EU) has been implementing PWPs since 2001 under four design features and targeting approaches. The four programmes include the PWP (2001 – 2005), PWP Food Security Programme (2002 2004), Special Program for Relief and Investment in Needy Times (SPRINT) implemented during the hunger period usually between November and March (Ntata, 2006), and the Income Generating Public Works (IGPWP) since 2005 (Chirwa, 2007 and Ellis et al, 2009). The programme is mainly funded by the European Union. The overall objective of the programme is achieving durable poverty alleviation and food security. The programme aims at improving overall socio-economic status of households by addressing lack of accessibility to rural areas; developing sustainable fuel wood and timber supplies; improving dry season gardening and providing an alternative to the distribution of food to needy communities and to replace these food handouts with projects and activities that enable communities to achieve longer-term food security. In order to achieve these objectives the programme focuses on three main activities, namely: rehabilitation and maintenance of rural feeder roads; establishment of village forest funds, nurseries and tree planting; and establishment of small-scale irrigation schemes.

The IGPWP is implemented in 17 districts out of the 28 districts of Malawi. The programme initially started in two districts in central region but was extended to all districts in the central region between 2001 and 2004. Currently, the programme covers districts in the other regions, particularly the southern region where poverty is relatively high. The IGPWP benefits the community in terms of wage incomes from two activities:

rehabilitation of roads and bridges and the maintenance of roads. Local labour is used by contractors in the rehabilitation of roads and bridges, and in the road maintenance phase local communities form road maintenance clubs for routine maintenance of the roads throughout the year. The programme has reached about 33 889 people during the road and bridge rehabilitation and 1 650 people involved in routine road maintenance by the first quarter of 2009 (GOM and EU, 2009).

3.2.2.3 Farm Input Subsidy Programme

The Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP) is the largest social protection programme in Malawi in terms of number of beneficiaries and the budget. The FISP was first implemented in the 2005/06 agricultural season following a poor-harvest season and a high maize import bill to augment domestic supply in 2004/05 agricultural season. In 2009/10, the FISP was in its fifth year of implementation, with changes in the scale, scope and ways of implementation (Dorward et al, 2010). The FISP aims at promoting access and use of fertilizers among smallholder farmers in order to increase agricultural productivity and food security. According to GOM (2008a) the main objective of the farm input subsidy programme is to achieve household food self-sufficiency and increased income through increased food and cash crop production. The FISP is largely financed by the government, with donor support being in form of overall budgetary support and through the purchase of improved seeds.

The target is 2.8 million farming households out of an estimated 3.4 farming households in all the districts in Malawi. The size of the FISP has increased from 132,000 tonnes of fertilizers in 2005/06 to 216,000 tonnes in 2007/08. This has also meant that the cost of the subsidy has escalated from MK5.1 billion (2.1 percent of GDP) in 2005/6 to MK16.3 billion (3.4 percent of GDP) in 2007/08 and to MK31 billion (5.5 percent of GDP) in 2008/09 (Dorward et al., 2010). The fertilizer subsidy per farmer increased from 64 percent to 79 percent of the commercial price in 2005/06 and 2007/08, respectively. In the 2010/11 government budget the size of the subsidy has been reduced to 160 000 tonnes of fertilizers (GOM, 2010).

3.3 Regulatory Framework

Currently, there is no regulatory framework for the implementation of social protection programmes in Malawi. This has resulted in variations of the implementation framework of similar programmes implemented by different agencies. However, the draft National Social Support Policy gives responsibility to the Ministry of Development Planning and Cooperation as the coordination agency of social protection programmes in Malawi (GOM, 2009a). The policy also provides for the establishment of the National Social Support Technical Committee of state and non-state actors responsible for providing technical direction and recommendations on the implementation of social protection programmes.

IV. Implementation Framework

4.1 Identification, Selection and Delivery of Benefits

The identification and selection of beneficiaries is one of the difficult issues in social protection programmes, particularly in situations where poverty and vulnerability is high and where resources are also limited. Ellis et al (2009) identify six ways in which social protection programmes have identified and selected beneficiaries in Africa. These include geographic targeting, categorical targeting, means tests, proxy means tests, community selection and self-selection. These targeting mechanisms have different implications for costs and targeting errors: errors of inclusion and exclusion and the do affect the effectiveness and efficiency of the interventions. Table 2 presents the targeting mechanism used in various social protection schemes in Malawi. Targeting is at two levels: targeting the geographical area of intervention and targeting of beneficiaries. The typology shows a variation of targeting criteria and the use of mixed criteria in most social protection programmes. The diversity of targeting mechanisms reflect the fact that there is no single best approach to targeting social transfers, however, a balance has to be made between the costs and the extent to which a particular approach minimizes inclusion and exclusion errors (Ellis et al, 2009).

4.1.1 Cash Transfer Programmes

The SCT programme targets ultra poor households who are at the same time labour constrained. According to Schubert and Huijbregts (2006), households that qualify to receive cash transfers meet two criteria. First, households must be in the lowest expenditure quintile and live below the national ultra poverty line. The proxies for ultra poverty include households eating only one meal per day and are unable to purchase essential non-food items like soap, clothing, school utensils; resorting to begging, and have no valuable assets. Secondly, a household must be labour constrained such as having no able bodied household members in the age group 19 to 64 years, who are fit for work (because they are chronically sick, or disabled), or a household has a dependency ratio of more than 3.

The targeting processes involves the local communities, in which the Community Social Protection Committee a sub-committee of the Village Development Committee is responsible for interviewing all households in the village in order to identify those that meet the criteria and rank the households in order of need (Schubert and Huijbregts, 2006). The results of the beneficiary identification exercise are presented to the community and with the help of the district-level Social Protection Committee, 10 percent of the needy households are selected to receive monthly cash transfers.

Miller et al (2010) using various indicators of ultra-poverty find that the exclusion errors range from 37 percent to 68 percent, hence the 10 percent cut-off leaves many eligible households out of the scheme. Furthermore, if those not eligible were removed from participation, then the cut-off point of about 15 to 19 percent based on one meal per day and using the poverty line would eliminate exclusion errors, respectively. Miller et al (2008b and 2010) also found that 24 percent of the households that were receiving cash transfers were not eligible and attribute the inclusion errors to the lack of clarity of the targeting concepts and the use of poor proxies, favouritism and the influence of village level politics.

4.1.2 School Feeding Programmes

The school feeding programmes use geographic targeting based on vulnerability to food insecurity, the enrolment and drop-out rates and the gender disparity in school enrolment. It uses the Vulnerability Mapping Assessment to identify areas that are vulnerable to food insecurity as a primary criterion and select participating schools on the basis of school enrolment and drop-out rates. WFPSMP also uses categorical targeting for take-home rations. Take-home monthly rations of maize are given to girls and orphaned boys who are in Standard 5 to 8 in the lean season – January to April (WFP, 2007). MMSFP also target schools based on vulnerability to food insecurity but for their under-six year olds feeding nursery school centres the programme uses orphans as their categorical targeting criteria (Mary's Meal, 2010). The school feeding programmes use community volunteers to implement some of the activities, although the extent of use of volunteers differs in the two schemes. For instance, the MMSFP exclusively uses community volunteers to prepare meals and they are paid in-kind in form of 50 kg of maize per month, but the motivation for their participation is not the compensation (Uny, 2008).

Table 2: Targeting Mechanisms and Social Protection Schemes in Malawi

Type	Name of Scheme	Targeting Criteria
Cash Transfer	1. Social Cash Transfer (SCT)	Proxy means test: ultra-poverty line • 1 meal per day • Resorting to begging • Unable to buy soap and clothing • No valuable assets • Labour constrained households • Households with dependency ratio > 3
	2. Zomba Cash Transfer Programme (ZCTP)	Categorical targeting • School girls of age 13-22 years in Standard 7 – Form 4 • School dropout girls of age 13 – 22 years out of school for less than 3 years
School Feeding	1. WFP School Meals Programme (WFPSMP)	Geographic targeting: • Vulnerability to food insecurity • School enrolment and drop-out rates • Gender disparity Categorical targeting for monthly rations: • Girls and orphan boys in Standard 5 – 8
	2. Mary's Meal School Feeding Programme (MMSFP)	Geographic targeting: • Vulnerability to food insecurity • School enrolment and drop-out rates Categorical targeting for monthly rations: • Under six year olds, mainly orphans

Productivity Enhancing	1. MASAF Public Works Programme (MASAF-PWP)	• Geographic targeting using vulnerability to food insecurity to select areas • Self-selection for beneficiaries • Categorical in some cases: female-headed
	2. Income Generating Public Works Programme (IGPWP)	• Self-selection for rehabilitation • Selection by chiefs and local leaders for road maintenance
Farm Input Subsidies	1. Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP)	Multiple criteria: • Smallholder resource-poor farmer owning land • Resident in the village • Female-headed, elderly-headed households • Ability to redeem voucher

Source: Schubert and Huijbregts (2006), Dorward et al (2010), Baird et al (2010), GOM/EU (2009), Mary's Meals (2010), WFP (2009, 2010), Miller et al (2010)

4.1.3 Public Works Programmes

Public works programmes use different systems of identification and targeting of beneficiaries. The MASAF-PWP uses some form of geographic targeting using the Vulnerability Assessment Mapping (VAM) in conjunction with the district poverty profile in selecting areas for public works programmes within the district. However, in practice, the locations of projects are more demand driven than being determined by geographic targeting. In terms of selection of beneficiaries, two mechanisms were designed for the selection of beneficiaries in conventional MASAF-PWPs. The first is through self-selection given a wage rate that is believed to be a disincentive to participation by the non-poor; and second is community targeting in which beneficiaries are selected by communities using participatory rural appraisal (MASAF, 2003). Under the self-targeting mechanism, the wage rate was set at 20 percent below the minimum wage.

Existing studies and program monitoring reports, however, reveal that the mechanisms of targeting in MASAF PWP in practice have been a combination of self-targeting, rationing and community targeting. Beneficiary assessment studies reveal that in some cases the jobs were rationed by the project committees, the foremen and traditional readers while in some it was based on first come first served basis given the information on the wage rate (Mvula et al., 2000). The rationing is inevitable due to the financial constraints in the project budgets. Typically, MASAF-PWP projects have set budgets and for MASAF the requirement is that 40 percent of the project budget should be expended on the wage bill. Similarly, administrative rationing by local leaders in conjunction with foremen is also prevalent in MASAF PWPs. The local leadership with the assistance of the District Assemblies selected the beneficiaries (Kalanda et al., 2006), contrary to the operating procedures for MASAF-PWP, implying that the principle of self-targeting became difficult to implement in practice. The local leadership also ensured that only one person per household worked in the programme.

The review of targeting experiences in MASAF-PWP, demonstrates difficulties in consistently applying agreed upon targeting procedures and mechanism in practice. The ability to consistently adhere to policy guidelines partly depend on the institutional capacity and the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation systems and consistency in policies and guidelines. The mix of different targeting mechanism above those stipulated in operating manuals also demonstrates the difficulties in targeting the vulnerable groups in areas where the proportion of the poor is high. Given resource envelops for projects, the high proportion of the poor in some of the areas meant that employment had to be rationed by local leaders or local committees. Another reason for the deviation of targeting from the recommended mechanisms is the problem of integrating additional criteria in targeting. For instance, MASAF guidelines in PWPs recommend gender sensitivity in targeting so as to achieve a target of at least 40 percent of participation by women. Such additions to the targeting criteria are inconsistent with the self-targeting mechanism using the wage rate although consistent with community based targeting (if the communities include gender as one criterion in the wealth ranking exercise). Under such conditions of inconsistent criteria, rationing by committees and local leadership is inevitable, with potential consequences of introducing biases and favouritism.

The IGPWP targeting of workers from the community occurs at two stages of the public works: the rehabilitation and maintenance phases of the public works programme. First, during the road/bridges rehabilitation phase, the selection of beneficiaries is done by small-scale contractors responsible for the construction of the infrastructure with the GOM/EU Program Management Unit providing general guidelines on potential beneficiaries. The contractors are accountable to the quality of infrastructure and GOM/EU does not impose restrictions on specific target groups to ensure that delivery of quality infrastructure is not compromised by contractors. The recruitment of members of the community to work on the projects is based on willingness to participate in the implementation of the project. Hence, there is no guarantee that vulnerable groups are targeted in the phase of rehabilitation of roads and bridges.

Secondly, during the road maintenance phase of IGPWP, local leaders and Chiefs identify members of the community responsible for the regular maintenance of the roads and 1 member, living close to the section of the road, is identified per every kilometre of the road. The road maintenance clubs open bank accounts with local banks to which their payments are made. The road maintenance club members are trained in road maintenance, operation of business enterprises and management. It is apparent that the selection of members of the maintenance clubs is not based on vulnerability.

4.1.4 Farm Input Subsidy Programme

The FISP is designed as a targeted input subsidy programme, targeting smallholder farmers with land but who cannot afford to purchase inputs at market rates. The target is defined as resource-poor Malawians who owns a piece of land, resident in the village with special consideration to guardians looking after physically challenged persons and vulnerable groups such as child headed, female-headed or orphan headed households and those households with infected or affected with HIV and AIDS (GOM, 2008). Although Dorward et al. (2010) note that the targeting criteria has more explicitly placed more emphasis on vulnerable groups, in practice, there are difficulties in the application of these criteria, particularly due to the fact that the targeting criteria remained wide and that the criteria fitted large numbers of households against the available number of coupons allocated for the area.

Targeting of beneficiaries is one of the determinants of the efficiency parameters of the subsidy programme. Ideally, the subsidy should not replace commercial purchases of fertilizers and seeds by smallholder farmers. In other words, the subsidy should have minimal exclusion and inclusion errors for it to be effective. Existing studies find variations in the targeting criteria, with communities emphasizing one or two features of eligibility criteria in the selection of beneficiaries (SOAS et al, 2008; Dorward et al, 2010). For instance, Dorward et al (2010) find that the targeting of beneficiaries in the base allocation has moved from identification of beneficiaries by the village committee to open meeting registration of beneficiaries. There is evidence that the use of a community-based identification of beneficiaries through open meetings improved targeting as coupons were more likely to be allocated to the poor (Chirwa et al, 2010). The open meetings in the identification and distribution of coupons provided opportunities for everyone to be involved and eliminated any suspicion and mistrust. Nonetheless, concerns remain in the processes and identification of beneficiaries for the supplementary coupons.

In 2008/09, voter registration cards were used as a pre-condition to receipt of coupons and the redemption of coupons, a process that alienated eligible beneficiaries without voter registration cards. Owing to the limited number of coupons available, Dorward et al (2010) find that in some areas the households share the procured inputs, implying that some households receive less than the required number of coupons. For instance, in 2006/07 the average number of coupons received per household was 1.7 for both maize and tobacco fertilizers (SOAS et al, 2008; Dorward et al, 2010).

4.2 Determination of the Value of Benefits

The extent to which social protection schemes can contribute to poverty reduction and livelihood promotion depends on the level of benefits and the period over which the benefits are received by beneficiaries. Nonetheless, the setting of the level of benefits in some cases has not been based on some sort of consumption norms that would enable the vulnerable households to meet their minimum consumption needs. In most social protection schemes, it is difficult to establish how the programme arrived at the value of the benefits and the time period over which vulnerable households should be targeted. Table 3 illustrates the variations in the benefit and the duration of the transfers in different social protection schemes in Malawi.

Table 3: Value of Benefits in Social Protection Schemes in Malawi 2009

Name of scheme	Component	Value of benefits per beneficiary	Duration
1. Social Cash Transfer (SCT)	-	MK1 700 ($12) per month	> 1 year
2. Zomba Cash Transfer Programme (ZCTP)	-	$10 per month	2 years
3. WFP School Meals Programme (WFPSMP)	On-site meals	$1.80 per month (both on-site and rations)	All year
	Conditional take-home rations	12.5 kg of maize	4 months
4. Mary's Meals School Feeding Programme (MMSFP)	-	MK147 ($1.05) per month	All year
5. MASAF Public Works Programme (MASAF-PWP)	-	MK1 640 ($12) per month	1 – 4 months
6. Income Generating Public Works Programme (IGPWP)	Rehabilitation	MK2 260 ($16) per month	1 - 3 months
	Maintenance	MK1 750 ($12.5) per month	> 10 months
7. Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP)	-	2 bags of 50kg fertilizer ($47 in 2007 and $129) per year	Every year

Source: Schubert and Huijbregts (2006), Dorward et al (2010), Baird et al (2010), GOM/EU (2009), Mary's Meals (2010), WFP (2009, 2010)

4.2.1 Cash Transfer Programmes

The SCT provides monthly cash transfers to beneficiary households based on the household size and the existence of primary and secondary school children. According to Schubert and Huijbregts (2006) a 1 member household receives MK600 ($4), 2 member household receives MK1 000 ($7), 3 member household receive MK1 400 ($10) and a household with 4 or more members receives MK1 800 ($13) per month. In addition, households also receive bonus payments of MK200 ($1.4) and MK400 ($2.8) for children in primary and secondary schools, respectively. Taking these payments into account, on average households receive MK1 700 ($12) per month (Miller et al., 2008c). It is argued that the $12 is sufficient to fill the gap of $9.6 between the ultra-poverty line of $46 and the average monthly expenditure of $36.5 of the household in the lowest expenditure quintile (Schubert and Huijbregts, 2006).

The Zomba Cash Transfer Programme paid monthly stipends to school girls and their guardians and also covered part of the school fees for girls that were in secondary school. The programme paid different amounts that were allocated randomly during the first cash transfer month.[3] The transfer amounts for the girls range from $1 to $5 per month while transfer amounts for the parents range from $4 to $10 per month. The combined transfers on average represented about 15 percent of estimated household monthly expenditures from the baseline survey.

4.2.2 School Feeding Programmes

The basic package for the school feeding programmes is transfer in terms of cooked food that provides the necessary nutrients for basic survival. In Malawi the school feeding programmes used fortified foods and locally available foods for school feeding. The main food provided is *Likuni Phala* (corn soya blend porridge). According to Bundy et al (2009) the nutritional content of school meals depend on local preferences, habits and the duration of the day and that for half-day school the meals need to provide about 30-45 percent of the daily requirements (555 – 830 Kcal). The basis for establishing the portion of school meals is therefore the daily recommended consumption that provides of 2100 kcal of energy.

The WFPSMP provides school children with a mid-hot serving of 100 grams of corn soya blend porridge each day of school. In addition, girls and orphan boys in standards 5 to 8 receive 12.5 kilograms of maize from January to April as take home rations provided the children attend 80 percent of the school days.

The MMSFP provides children in under-six nursery school centres 2 meals per day: *Likuni Phala* in the morning and a maize and vegetable stew before they leave at 3 pm. Mary's Meals also provides *Likuni Phala* once a day in its primary school feeding programme. According to Lawton et al (2007) in the nursery and primary schools pupils get their 40 percent and 30 percent of their energy needs, respectively.

4.2.3 Public Works Programmes

The benefits in public works programmes are in form of wages received by workers after completion of allocated tasks. MASAF and IGPWP use different wage rates for their public works programmes. The wage rate used by MASAF is MK85 ($0.61) per day, the wage that was recommended by government as the minimum wage for public works programmes in Malawi. This minimum wage was based on the recommendations from Chirwa et al (2004) who derived the range of wages for public works programme adequate to make a significant impact on poverty and which would allow workers to save and build assets. The recommended wage rates were based on three minimum consumption baskets – the poverty line, the subsistence needs basket as defined by World Food Programme and the perceived requirement poverty line based on a survey of PWP workers. Chirwa et al (2004) taking into account beneficiaries own production and other income sources recommended a minimum wage rate between MK83 ($0.59) (to meet basic food needs) and MK107 ($76) (to meet basic food and non-food needs) for an employment duration of 18 months. The wage rate applied adopted by the government for public works programme is just above the minimum recommended by Chirwa et al (2004).

[3] Both school girls and guardians picked one envelope randomly in the first month of the transfer and the amount of money in the envelope defined their monthly entitlement for the rest of the programme.

The wages in the IGPWP paid to workers engaged in road rehabilitation and maintenance are set by private contractors using the norms in the construction industry. In the road/bridge rehabilitation, on average, workers earn MK113 ($0.81) per day. The average income earned by the beneficiaries is about MK5 250 ($37.5) for a period of 1 – 3 months of employment. In the IGPWP, communities also benefit from wage employment during routine maintenance by selected members organised into clubs. Members earn MK1 750 ($12.5) per month per kilometre for 100 percent of the scheduled maintenance. In addition, members get a monthly incentive bonus of MK500 ($3.6) if the quality of work is above 75 percent of scheduled maintenance (GOM and EU, 2009).

4.2.4 Farm Input Subsidy Programme

The FISP mainly focuses on the subsidization of maize fertilizers and improved maize seeds. However, the scope of coverage of crops under the subsidy programme had varied over time, and in addition to maize the coverage included tobacco, tea and coffee fertilizers, legume seeds, cotton seeds and chemicals and maize storage chemicals. The subsidy comes in various packages. Table 4 shows the various packages of the input subsidy that has been used in various agricultural season by type of crops. A beneficiary household was entitled to either a maize package of fertilizers and seeds or a tobacco package of fertilizers or a cotton package of chemicals and seeds. In addition, beneficiaries were also entitled to a flexible coupon to enable them purchase legume seeds, maize storage chemicals as well as improved maize seeds. In 2008/09 season, due to substantial increases in the prices of fertilizers, the fertilizer subsidy also covered smallholder tea and coffee farmers. Tobacco, tea and coffee are the main commercial and export crops in Malawi and there are arguments in favour of and against subsidizing cash crops. The value of the transfer to the households depends on the price of fertilizers and maize seeds and it has ranged between $25 in 2006/06 to $128 in 2008/09 per household. In 2008/09, fertilizer prices increased substantially while smallholder farmer contribution fell.

Table 4: Farm Input Subsidy Programme Packages 2005/06 – 2009/10

Inputs/Crop	Maize	Tobacco	Cotton
Fertilizer	• 1 bag of 50 kilograms of NPK • 1 bag of 50 kilograms of UREA	• 1 bag 50 kilogram of CAN • 1 bag 50 kilogram of D. Compound	-
Seeds	• 4.5 kilograms of open pollinated varieties (OPV) maize seed • 2 kilograms of hybrid seed [a]	-	• 5 kilograms of acid delinted and treated cotton seed [b]
Chemicals	-	-	• 1 bottle of 50 millilitres of aphicide[b] • 2 bottles of 200 millilitres of larvicide[b]
Other seeds and chemicals	• Bean seed (2 kg) [b], groundnuts seed (2 kg) [b], soybean seeds (2-3 kg) [b] and pigeon peas seed (2 kg) [b], 200 grams bottle of maize storage pesticide [c].		

Notes: [a] since 2006/07 season, [b] since 2007/08 season, [c] since 2008/09 season
Source: Chirwa et al (2010)

4.3 Data and Social Registry

There is no single social registry of beneficiaries of social protection schemes in Malawi. Each programme maintains its own register of beneficiaries targeted for social protection scheme and there is no cross-referencing as to whether some of the beneficiaries are multiple recipients of social protection. Indeed, in some cases, special public works programmes have been implemented at a higher wage rate just to enable vulnerable households to earn wage incomes to meet their current subsistence needs while at the same time being able to redeem subsidized fertilizer vouchers (SOAS et al, 2008). The largest beneficiary register is maintained by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security who conducted a census of smallholder farmers in Malawi from which they identified the list of beneficiary farming households. However, since the targeting mechanism for different social protection programmes vary considerably, the agricultural input subsidy registry cannot be used to target beneficiaries for cash transfers and public works programmes.

4.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of the social protection programmes is problematic in most of the programmes due to the fact that this aspect is usually not taken into account in the design and implementation. In most cases, monitoring and evaluation has focused on the monitoring of project activities and output rather than the outcomes or development results of the various interventions (Ellis et al, 2009). This makes it difficult to measure the contribution of social protection programmes on outcomes. In most of the social protection programmes, baseline data is not collected and often the impacts of the interventions are based on the comparison between participants and non-participants. For most of the social protection programmes in this study, there is no systematic impact evaluation and where impact evaluations have been done these have been externally driven. For instance, design of the pilot scheme of the social cash transfer had baseline data and was monitored and evaluated over time (Miller et al, 2008a and 2010). Similarly, the ZCTP conducted a baseline and the intervention is being evaluated on the extent to which it contributes to schooling and health outcome (Baird et al, 2010). The FISP does not have baseline data but is being evaluated on its contribution to food security (SOAS et al, 2008; Doward and Chirwa, 2010).

4.5 Financing Mechanisms

Most of the social protection programmes implemented in Malawi are largely financed by donors including the costs of delivering the benefits to beneficiaries. Table 5 shows that the government contribution to social protection programmes is minimal except for the farm input subsidy in which the government provides about 86 percent of the resources. However, as Dorward et al (2010) note, even in the subsidy programme the donor contribution is much higher if one take into account the total budgetary support. The social cash transfer is funded by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and there is no budgetary provision for the implementation of cash transfers in the government budget.

Similarly, the school feeding programmes are largely funded by donors. In the case of WFPSMP, about 97 percent of the funding is provided by WFP. The MMSFP is funded by Scottish International Relief and private local companies. The other contribution in term of labour input in the preparation of means in the MMSFP comes from the community volunteers that are responsible for the preparation of school meals. The public works programmes are mainly externally funded – with MASAF-PWP being funded by the loans from the World Bank and the IGPWP being funded by the European Union.

Table 5: Financing Arrangements in Social Protection Schemes in Malawi

Name of scheme	Annual budget/ expenditures ($)	Government funding (%)
1. Social Cash Transfer (SCT)	3,550,000	-
2. Zomba Cash Transfer Programme (ZCTP)	120,000	0
3. WFP School Meals Programme (WFPSMP)	4,699,000	3
4. Mary's Meals School Feeding Programme (MMSFP)	3,857,000	0
5. MASAF Public Works Programme (MASAF-PWP)	-	-
6. Income Generating Public Works Programme (IGPWP)	5,400,000	0
7. Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP)	131,300,000	86

Source: Galloway et al (2009), Dorward et al (2010), GOM/EU (2009), Baird et al (2010)

V. Outcomes of Social Protection

5.1 Social Protection Outcomes and MDGs

One weakness of social protection programmes in Africa is the limited scope and outreach. Ellis et al (2009) note that most of the social protection schemes are part of non-governmental organisations efforts to address many different facets of poverty and vulnerability and very few programmes are implemented at national level. In some cases, where programmes are implemented nationally, the resources are spread thinly thereby undermining the effectiveness of social protection on intended outcomes. The problems of limited scope and outreach are also evident in social protection programmes in Malawi as illustrated in Table 6. Only two of the seven programmes, MASAF-PWP and FISP, are implemented at national level covering all the 28 districts in Malawi. These two programmes are included in the national budget. The FISP reaches more than half of the rural farm households in Malawi. The school feeding programmes reach about 17 percent of primary schools and 30 percent of primary school children in Malawi (WFP, 2009). The cash transfer programme has recently been scaled up to other districts and its outreach still remains limited. The ZCTP was a research-based intervention focused only one district and targeting 1 230 school girls for 2 years. In terms of outreach, since 2001 a total of 33 889 people have so far benefited from employment in the road rehabilitation component, with 42 percent of these being women. With respect to the IGPWP, in the routine maintenance component, only 1 650 beneficiaries have benefited from public works, with about 33 percent women earning on average MK41 268 ($295) per club member since 2005. The road maintenance component has cumulatively transferred MK126.47 million ($0.9 million) to 2,647 members (312 clubs) with an average transfer of MK29 428 ($210) per club since 2001 (GOM and EU, 2009).

The available evidence from different studies in Malawi reveal that social protection programme in Malawi have contributed to poverty reduction, improvement in food security, improvements in health and school outcome and gender disparity. However, the potential contribution of social protection programmes on the MDGs varies and depends on the extent to which the programmes emphasize particular MDG targets. Table 7 presents the recent assessment of Malawi's progress towards achieving MDGs and the potential contribution of social protection programmes to achieving the MDGs.

Table 6: Outreach in Social Protection Schemes in Malawi 2009

Name of scheme	Number of districts	Number of beneficiaries	% of women beneficiaries
1. Social Cash Transfer (SCT)	7	23,652[a]	-
2. Zomba Cash Transfer Programme (ZCTP)	1	1,230	100
3. WFP School Meals Programme (WFPSMP)	13	642,109	52
4. Mary's Meals School Feeding Programme (MMSFP)	16	300,295	-
5. MASAF Public Works Programme (MASAF-PWP)	28	130,000[a]	-
6. Income Generating Public Works Programme (IGPWP)	17	36,536	42
7. Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP)	28	1,700,000[a]	-

Note: [a] Number of households
Source: Miller et al (2010), GOM (2009b), GOM/EU (2009), WFP (2009, 2010).

With respect to cash transfer programme, there is high potential contribution of cash transfers towards the achievement of MDG 1 and 2 due to the income effects and the incentives that have been incorporated to encourage education. The income effect can also contribute positively to MDG 3 (by encouraging girls' education) and MDG 4 and 6 (through increased food consumption). For instance, Miller et al (2008a) find that the cash transfer programme in one of the districts, compared to the control group, led to less incidence of disease (7.9 percent difference), lower malnutrition rates, greater demand for health care, increased expenditure of children education leading to high enrolment rates (4.9 percent difference), significant accumulation of household assets and livestock, increased agricultural production and higher monthly expenditures on food. Similarly, in the ZCTP, Baird et al (2010) find that cash transfers increased school enrolment (particularly among dropouts) and the incidence of the onset of sexual activity was 38 percent lower among beneficiaries than the control group.

School feeding programmes can also help accelerate the achievement of MDG 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 8. The food supplements help address the problems of household food security and malnutrition, thereby positively contributing to poverty reduction, child mortality and prevention of diseases. As WFP (2010) note school meals help to break the hunger and poverty cycles, and such meals reach children and households that are affected by HIV and AIDS. Since these meals are provided to nursery and primary school children, school feeding programmes directly promote education in general and girls' education in particular. There is evidence that the school feeding programmes in Malawi are contributing to school enrolment, reduction in absenteeism and promoting girls' education. According to WFP (2010) the schools that participate in the school meals programme are reported to have increased enrolment by 41 percent, increased girls' school attendance by 16 percent and increased pass rates for pupils by 6 percent compared to schools that were not participating in the school meals programme. School feeding programmes have also enhanced partnerships between donors, local governments, private sector and communities.

Table 7: Social Protection Outcomes and MDGs in Malawi

	MDG1 *Poverty*	MDG2 *Education*	MDG3 *Gender*	MDG4 *Child Mortality*	MDG5 *Maternal Mortality*	MDG6 *Diseases*	MDG7 *Environment*	MDG8 *Partnerships*
GOM Country MDG Status	Likely	Feasible	Unlikely	Likely	Unlikely	Likely	Likely	Feasible
Type of SP	*Contribution of Social Protection to Achieving MDGs*							
1. Cash Transfer	High	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	??
2. School Feeding	High	High	High	High	Low	High	Low	High
3. Public Works	High	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Low	High	??
4. Farm Input Subsidy	High	Low	Low	High	Low	Medium	Low	??

Source: GOM (2008b) and Author's evaluation

The immediate benefit of public works programmes is the wage income earned by workers while in the long-term the assets created may stimulate economic activities. It is therefore expected that well-designed public works programmes can help in poverty reduction and in improving the natural environment depending on the types of assets being created under public works programmes. Although, most of the public works programmes only provide short term employment, the available evidence suggests that they are helping in poverty reduction. Mukherjee and Benson (2003) find that participation in public works programme to be positively associated with per capita consumption, such that access to public works programmes in the community increases welfare by 19 percent.

The farm input subsidy programme has improved the availability of maize, the main staple food in Malawi, and consequently leading to reduction to the number of food insecure households in Malawi. According to GOM (2009b) the proportion of food secure households has increased from 67 percent in 2005 to 99 percent in 2009 and per capita cereal consumption has increased to 285 kilograms from 170 kilograms. This has largely been attributed to the farm input subsidy programme that has been implemented every since the 2005/06 agricultural season. The high food consumption has the potential to positively contribute to MDGs 2, 4 and 6. Dorward and Chirwa (2010) also find that the subsidy programme has contributed to improvements in the food security and incomes of beneficiaries and has propelled wider economic growth. The implementation of the agricultural input subsidy has enabled the country to produce more food with the stunting and wasting of under-five year old children from falling from 6.4 percent and 6.8 percent respectively in 2005 to 4.9 percent and 5.8 percent in 2007 (GOM, 2008b). However, in terms of gender, SOAS et al (2008) find that a lower proportion of female-headed households have access to the farm input subsidy and where they have access they tend to receive less on average.

Malawi has made some progress in achieving some of the MDG targets while others remain daunting tasks. We highlight the progress that has been made towards achieving MDGs and assess the contribution of social protection programmes. Significant progress has been made towards the achievement of MDG 1 in Malawi. Table 8 presents the trends in poverty in Malawi between 2005 and 2009. This period also covers the period of implementation of the farm input subsidy programme in Malawi. The national poverty rate has declined from 52 percent of the population in 2005 to 39 percent in 2009, representing a 25 percent decline over the 5 year period. Urban poverty has declined by 44 percent while rural poverty has declined by 23 percent. This illustrates the progress Malawi has made towards achieving MDG 1. It is worth noting that all the main social protection programmes implemented in Malawi have direct impact on poverty, and it should not be surprising that significant progress is being made in addressing the problem of poverty.

Table 8: Trends in Poverty in Malawi 2005 -2009, Headcount (%)

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
National	52.4	45.0	40.0	40	39
Urban	25.4	25.0	11.0	13	14
Rural	55.9	47.0	44.0	44	43

Source: NSO (2010)

The very significant progress that has been made in MDG 1 in reducing the proportion of the population in extreme poverty has been achieved due to several interventions. Notable interventions include are the implementation of the agricultural input subsidy targeted on vulnerable households, introduction of social support programmes for vulnerable groups, pro-poor allocation of public expenditures and macroeconomic management leading to positive economic growth rates in the past five years. These have been assisted by good weather and high tobacco prices and high political will to implement pro-poor programs. Poverty reduction and food security have been at the centre of the political and development agenda of the country and MDG 1 has added impetus to the implementation of programmes aimed at reducing poverty in the country.

With respect to MDG 2, social cash transfers and school feeding programmes have the highest potential of acceleration the achievement of universal primary education. Conditional transfers or transfers that pay bonus for children in school have the highest potential to contributing to universal access to primary education. Although Malawi introduced free primary education in 1995, the net enrolment ratio in primary school declined from 82 percent in 2004 to73 percent in 2006 and it is projected that by 2012 the net enrolment ratio will be 84 percent (GOM, 2008b). Both social cash transfers and school feeding programmes are not yet implemented at national level, hence limiting the extent to which these social protection programmes can contribute effectively to the achievement of MDG 2. The potential role of public works and input subsidies on schooling targets are envisaged to be low.

The progress in achieving in MDG 3 has been limited and it is very unlikely that Malawi will meet most of the targets. Gender disparities in education, particularly at secondary and tertiary levels still remain high in Malawi. According to GOM (2008b), although the disparity at primary level is diminishing, the ratio of girls to boys at secondary level was

0.75 and the share of women in wage employment was 15 percent in 2006. Of the four main types of social protection, there is evidence that school feeding programmes have increased school enrolment among girls and this has contributed narrowing of the gender disparity in primary schools. As it has been noted by GOM (2008b) interventions such as school feeding programmes, nutrition programmes and direct support implemented at primary level have not started filtering through the upper levels of education.

There has been noticeable progress in reducing child mortality (MDG 4) from 189 in 2000 to 122 in 2006 due to increased health care services, immunization and child feeding programmes (GOM, 2008b). School feeding programmes such as the MMSFP for nursery schools have the potential to contribute to child mortality, but the coverage of this intervention is limited. Reducing maternal mortality (MDG 5) remains a challenge in Malawi and it is very unlikely that Malawi will meet the target by 2015. In 2006, the maternal mortality rate was 807 deaths per 100,000 live births and is projected to reach 338 in 2015 missing its target of 155. Social protection programmes seem to have limited impact in this area.

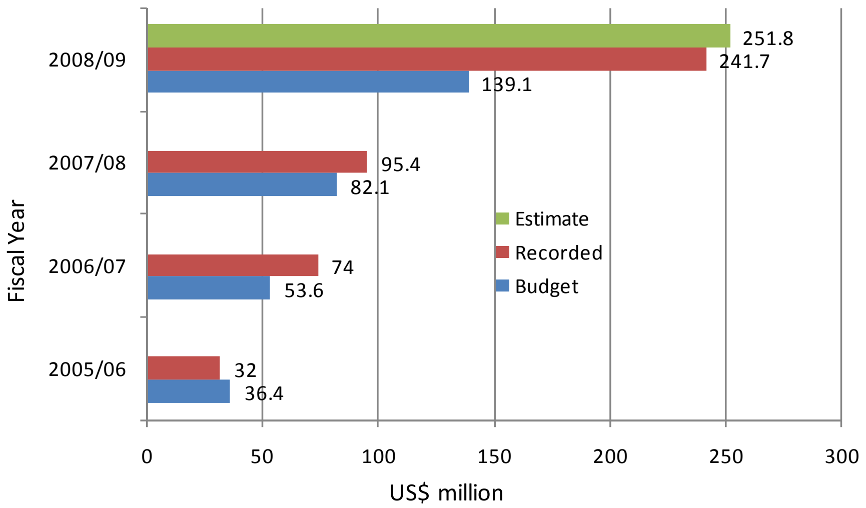
5.2 Fiscal Sustainability of Social Protection Schemes

In a review of social protection schemes in Africa, Ellis et al (2009) note that one of the problems with most schemes is unstable funding and lack of continuity. Most of the schemes are done on experimental basis and even when the outcomes are positive they are rarely scaled-up. In some cases, the administrative cost of delivering the benefits to beneficiaries are usually prohibitive to make implementation at national scale. As has been observed above, most of the social protection programmes in Malawi are being funded by donors and this limits the extent to which they can be scaled up. Poverty and vulnerability in Malawi remains high and up-scaling various social protection schemes could be costly and crowd out resources for other development activities such as infrastructure.

The experience of the FISP demonstrates the difficulties in the fiscal management and fiscal sustainability of social protection that target more than half of smallholder farmers in Malawi. The cost of the subsidy was estimated at 6 percent of the national budget in the 2005/06 fiscal year and increased to 16 percent in 2008/09 fiscal year (Dorward et al, 2010). According to Dorward and Chirwa (2010), the cost of the subsidy increased from 2.1 percent of gross domestic product in 2005/06 to 6.6 percent in 2008/09. It is also noted that the implementation of the subsidy programme tend to crowd out the other mandates of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. Figure 2 shows the budgeted, recorded and estimated expenditure of the agricultural input subsidy programme.[4] Over time the cost has been increasing and except for 2005/06, recorded expenditures have exceeded budgeted expenditures. The huge fiscal indiscipline in the 2008/08 fiscal year was a result of substantial increases in the prices of fertilizers.

[4] The recorded expenditures are expenditures recorded by the government as direct costs of the subsidy. As Dorward et al (2010) note most of the recurrent expenditures for the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, local authorities and other parastatals involved in the implementation devote a fair share of their resources to the implementation of the agricultural input subsidy. In 2008/09 fiscal year, estimated expenditures take into account some of these unrecorded costs.

Figure 2 Trends in Agricultural Input Subsidy Costs, 2005/06 – 2008/09



Source: Dorward et al (2010)

The expenditure on the subsidy is a significant burden on the national budget and resources. The design of the programme did not take the issue of sustainability into account. The programme is reaching out to many households, but the evidence shows that the better off households are more likely to receive the coupons than the poor (SOAS et al, 2008) and there is no concept of 'graduation' that can guide the extent to which subsidies could be targeted at those farmers that need them over time. In addition, although fertilizer prices have risen over time, the farmer coupon redemption costs has declined and the subsidy has increased in absolute terms, instead of the subsidy declining over time.

Some of the social protection programmes have addressed the issue of sustainability by incorporating the role of communities in the implementation and the procurement of local goods. For instance, the school feeding programme relies on community volunteers in the preparation of meals for school children and purchase local food stuff thereby reducing the cost of operations. Nonetheless, school feeding programmes are not well targeted at school level since all children whether from food secure or insecure households are eligible for school meals – hence the inclusion errors are generally high.

VI. Challenges

6.1 Institutional Challenges

There are several institutional challenges with respect to social protection programmes in Malawi including problems of coordination, lack of operational guidelines, lack of beneficiary register and identification. First, there is lack of coordination of social protection programmes both at national, sub-national and community level. The proposed Social Support Policy seeks to improve the coordination of social protection programmes at the central level through the development of the National Social Support Programme (GOM, 2009a). The existing situation is that different types of social protection schemes are coordinated by different government departments. For example, all school health and nutrition interventions are coordinated by a technical committee chaired by the MoEST, social cash transfers are coordinated by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Community Development, and the input subsidy programme is coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security.

Secondly, the issue of multiple coordination has resulted in different interpretation as to whether some of the programmes should be classified as social protection. The case of the agricultural input subsidy serves to illustrate this difficulty. On one hand, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security believes that agricultural subsidies should not be part of social protection and have not advanced social protection arguments for its existence and justification. On the other hand, the Ministry of Development Planning and Cooperation, believes that agricultural input subsidy as they target vulnerable groups should be part of social protection instruments.

Thirdly, the various social protection programmes are operated without national guidelines. There is lack of a national framework for the implementation of social protection programmes by different partners. For example, public works programmes in Malawi have paid different wages and have been of different duration. There is no consensus on what public works should serve if they are not implemented in 'emergency' situations. Similarly, there are no guidelines for targeting of beneficiaries in social protection programme across implementing agencies. For instance, in the public works programmes, one programme uses a combination of programme wage and rationing and in the other programme local contractors are responsible to recruit workers and often use physical strength as the primary criteria.

Finally, the lack of registry of beneficiaries leads to problems of multiple access to social protection schemes by beneficiaries. This problem is also compounded by the absence of the identification system in Malawi, which implies that vulnerable households can register for different social protection programmes under different names. This problem is also exacerbated by the fact that there is lack of collaboration at community level.

6.2 Financial and Economic Challenges

The financial and economic challenges for implementation of social protection programmes in Malawi are immense. Malawi has experimented with different social protection schemes but even successful ones have not been scaled-up due to financial constraints. One of the difficulties is the high proportion of the population experiencing various types of vulnerability that require different solutions. In order to reach all vulnerable groups, massive resources are required over a long period of time. The only national wide social protection programme, the agricultural input subsidy, accounts for more that 5 percent of the fiscal budget. There is also high reliance on donor to fund social protection programmes – and donor funds are limited and often available for a limited time.

Another challenge that emanates from lack of resources and the high proportion of vulnerable households is the spreading of resources too thinly over many poor and vulnerable households. The programmes are often implemented over a short duration and the benefits are not designed to graduate beneficiaries of out of poverty. Most programmes are designed to solve short-term problems and ignore the fact that graduating the vulnerable takes a long time. As a result, most of the programmes due to their limited coverage, short duration and small benefits per household have had limited effects on addressing vulnerability and reducing poverty.

6.3 Data and Evidence

The poor design of monitoring and evaluation systems in most of the social protection programmes in Malawi makes it difficult to assess the contribution of these programmes to development results. Often most programmes monitor activities and outputs in the short-term and it becomes difficult to make judgement about the long-term impact of social protection interventions. There are a few exceptions of social protection interventions which have been designed with systematic evaluation of outcomes. For instance, the pilot cash transfer scheme in Malawi was designed with a quasi-experiment evaluation that followed beneficiaries and a control group over time. Similarly, the ZCTP, was implemented as part of a research project on impact evaluation.

The other concern is the poor integration of monitoring and evaluation systems. Although, on paper there is a National System of Monitoring and Evaluation, it has been difficult to operationalize such systems due to financial constraints. Under the national monitoring and evaluation system, development programmes and interventions are expected to be monitored. However, national surveys often are ill-equipped to deal with detailed questions about policy interventions and social protection interventions.

6.4 Governance Issues

The governance challenges in social protection programmes emanate from the lack of a rights-based approach to social protection. This lack of a rights-based approach weakens mechanism of accountability and transparency at different levels. This is also exacerbated by the poor design of social protection programmes in form of unclear objectives, unclear targeting criteria and poor records. For example, the multiple criteria used in the targeting of input subsidies in Malawi lead to variations in the definition of target groups in different areas (SOAS et al., 2008). This also leads to capture of the benefits by local elites given that the number of coupons allocated to particular areas are rarely known to the beneficiaries. Similarly, in public works programmes, the basis for selecting beneficiaries is rarely known and most of the set criteria are applied differently.

Chirwa and Chinsinga (2007) find lack of accountability to the communities by those in authority in the management of funds used for the implementation of social programmes under the Malawi Social Action Fund. Similarly, one of the problems in determining the actual cost of the fertilizer subsidy programme is lack of accountability in terms of the extent to which the state-owned enterprises involved in the retailing of the subsidized fertilizers remit the voucher redemption price paid by smallholder farmers to central government. SOAS et al (2008) and Dorward et al (2010) also find evidence of use of 'tips' in the redemption of fertilizer coupons by beneficiaries.

6.5 Other Challenges

There are other challenges that are experienced in social protection interventions including objectives of the interventions, targeting and determination of benefits, elite and political capture, cost-effectiveness and scaling-up of social protection programmes. First, it has been observed that many social protection programmes tend to have multiple objectives, leading to different understanding by stakeholders on the purpose of the intervention. For example, SOAS et al (2008) document different interest of stakeholders in the farm input subsidy programme, leading to different emphasis on the aspect of the programme that best serve the interest of such stakeholders.

Secondly, one major implementation challenge of social protection in Malawi is the efficiency of targeting. There is usually a challenge of clearly linking the targeting criteria to the objective of the intervention. In other cases, the targeting criteria involve specification of multiple indicators that can either qualify beneficiaries. In the farm input subsidy, there is evidence that due to the multiple nature of targeting indicators, different communities emphasize of different indicators among the guideline indicators (Dorward et al, 2010).

Thirdly, a related issue to targeting and the objective of the intervention is the determination of benefit. This is particularly difficult due to diversity of vulnerability among the households. It brings questions of whether it is important and feasible to offer different benefits depending on the severity of the vulnerability of the households. Often a standard package is provided to all the households regardless of degree of vulnerability.

Fourthly, there is also a challenge of elite and political capture of social protection interventions. This result from the pressure at community level, particularly where the proportion of the poor is high. As Ellis et al (2009) note, it is usual in the community to hear that 'everybody is poor' and this opens avenues for the elites or politicians to capture the benefits from social protection scheme. Doward et al (2010) find that although the subsidy provides two vouchers for fertilizers per household, in practice households receive one coupon and there is a lot of sharing of inputs sometimes sanctioned by local leaders.

Fifthly, many of the social protection programmes are not cost effective, due to high operational administration costs. For example, in the school feeding programmes, school meals in the WFP meals programmes are twice as expensive as the meals programme implemented by Mary's Meal. One reason why Mary's Meals are less costly is that it depends very much on community volunteers to prepare the meals.

Finally, there is the challenge of scaling-up some of the programmes national level. Scaling-up of social protection has implications on the capacity of implementers and demands adequate human, technical and financial resources.

VII. Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper set out to explore salient issues in social protection interventions and how they have contributed to the achievement of MDGs in Malawi. With increasing vulnerability to many and multiple types of shocks, most governments in Africa have implemented social protection schemes targeted at vulnerable households. Most of such social protection schemes address issues of poverty while also delivering other outcomes such as nutrition, health, education and enhancing gender equality. There has also been promotion of partnerships in the coordination and implementation of social protection interventions. The paper has described the main social protection schemes in Malawi focusing on the legal and institutional framework, the design of the social protection scheme, their outcomes and potential contribution to achieving MDGs. In 2005, it was estimated that about 52 percent of the population in Malawi was living below the poverty line and recent estimates indicate that poverty has declined to 40 percent. Households are also vulnerable to multiple shocks, mainly related to agricultural activities such as food prices, produce prices and low crop yields. Social protection interventions, of different scope and scale, have been implemented targeting vulnerable groups. The following are the major findings from the social protection schemes in Malawi:

- There is no explicit constitutional right to access to social protection in the Malawi constitution, but the interventions derive from the right to development and government's commitment to address social injustices and inequalities. This implies that social protection scheme are *ad hoc*, and their long-term existence and their inclusion in the government expenditure framework cannot be guaranteed.

- Social protection interventions, however, are well articulated in government development strategies which are subject to change when political regimes change. For the past decade, social protection has taken centre stage as one of the strategies of addressing short-term and long-term poverty. The government budget has consistently included reasonable resources for implementation of social protection interventions in Malawi. There is currently a draft social protection policy, named Social Support Policy, being discussed at Cabinet level, which seeks to coordinate various social protection interventions in Malawi.

- Malawi has experimented with many social protection schemes, but the most common schemes are categorized into direct welfare programmes, productivity enhancing programmes and market interventions. The direct welfare programmes include unconditional and conditional social cash transfers and school feeding programmes. The productivity enhancing programmes include public works and agricultural input subsidies while market interventions include maize price controls and control of minimum agricultural produce prices.

- The social protection schemes in Malawi vary in their scope from pilot interventions in specific areas to national programmes. Apart from the market interventions, the other programmes that are implemented at national level are the public works programmes and the farm input subsidy programme. The farm input subsidy programme is the largest social protection programme in terms of the number of beneficiaries and the resources and is the only programme that has consistently been provided in the budget since 2005.

- There are many variations in terms of identification and selection of beneficiaries and determination and delivery of benefits which have implications for targeting errors, cost efficiency and cost effectiveness. The variety of targeting mechanisms includes geographic targeting, proxy means testing, categorical targeting, self-selection and multiple criteria. There is, however, lack of clarity on how benefits are determined in most schemes and the justifications for the duration of the interventions. The value of benefits to beneficiaries ranges from $1 per month to $16 per month, with the upper value being mostly applicable to short-time horizon interventions.

- The problems of targeting in an environment of high poverty and limited resources for social protection are exacerbated by the absence of a social registry of social protection recipients or target households for social protection interventions. This also leads to multiple access to different social protection schemes by the same households.

- The review of the available evidence indicate that social protection interventions can positively contribute to the achievement of MDGs, although improvements in monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes can enhance the quality of the evidence on the contribution of the social protection interventions to specific MDGs. In most cases, the impact of these interventions is marginal due their limited outreach and the small number of beneficiaries. There is evidence that most of the social protection schemes have direct impact on poverty reduction (MDG 1), education (MDG 2), child mortality (MDG 4) and prevention of diseases (MDG 6). These MDGs also turn out to be the ones that are likely to be achieved in Malawi by 2015.

- Social protection interventions in Malawi face many challenges including lack of institutional framework and national guidelines, poor design, sustainability, poor evaluation of outcomes, poor targeting and elite capture, cost effectiveness and difficulties in scaling-up.

The exploration of social protection interventions in Malawi suggests the need to improve in many areas in order to enhance their effectiveness in contributing to the achievement of MDGs. The following recommendations are made:

- There is need to institutionalize social protection either in the constitution or in specific legislation that accords vulnerable groups the right to such programmes so that resources for such programmes are guaranteed in the national budget framework. This will enable national consensus on the proportion of national resources that should be provided for social protection based on the poverty gap analysis.

- The coordination of social protection is important, so is the need to have national guidelines to ensure that social protection interventions deliver intended outcomes. Such guidelines need to address issues of the objectives of social protection, the target groups for social protection, the level of benefits and the duration a particular household can access benefits.

- For social protection interventions to assist in accelerating the achievement of MDGs, the targeting should be linked to the achievement of MDG targets. Social protection interventions should minimize targeting errors while also minimize the cost of targeting. In this regard, there must be clear and observable vulnerability indicators that should be used for targeting depending on the MDG target to which the intervention is linked.

- Development of a social registry is also critical to avoid duplication of efforts on the targeted households. This requires a system of national identification to allow cross-referencing of beneficiaries in different programmes.

- There is need to develop one social protection programme that can potentially deal with different sorts of vulnerability and that offers beneficiaries some freedom of choice in the use of resources.

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Annex: Terms of Reference

THE SCOPE FOR SOCIAL SAFETY NETS/SOCIAL PROTECTION SCHEMES TO ADVANCE PROGRESS ON THE MDGS IN AFRICA

Funding Support: Joint Pool Fund (Sweden)

Implementing Unit: MDGs & LDCs Section,
Economic Development and NEPAD Division

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The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) seeks to recruit consultants to undertake studies in a number of African countries on experiences and lessons learned in designing and implementing national social protection schemes such as safety nets, cash and/or in-kind transfers, conditional grants, insurance schemes etc as part of overall strategy to protect the poor and to advance progress towards the targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Background

The current global financial and economic crisis has revealed the fragility of recent economic growth in many African countries, narrowed the pathway out of poverty for many and increased the vulnerability of falling into poverty for many in formal and informal employment. According to recent estimates by ECA and the African Union Commission, growth in Africa will decelerate by 2.8% in 2009 as a consequence of the crisis. This will place at risk successes made in advancing progress towards the targets of the MDGs on the continent. It will also attenuate the impact of growth on poverty reduction in many countries and complicate the environment for emplacing interventions to reduce poverty in particular and to secure and accelerate progress towards the targets of the MDGs.

Well designed and implemented social protection regimes/safety net regimes can minimize the impact of the crisis in addition to serving as a pathway out of poverty for many. A number of African countries –Nigeria, South Africa, Lesotho, Tunisia, and Egypt– have in varying degrees introduced social safety nets and social protection schemes. Evidence suggests that these schemes are playing a positive role in reducing poverty. For example, a recent survey by Statistics South Africa found that South Africa's social security system, a major source of income for nearly 12 million people, is playing a positive role in reducing poverty and inequality. Subsidies for food, kerosene and other essential commodities exist in many African countries. In Tunisia, public works programmes are widely implemented to generate short-term employment for the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.

The current global financial and economic crisis and the slow progress of the region towards the targets of the MDGs underscore the need to explore innovative ways to reduce poverty and accelerate progress in Africa to achieve the MDGs. However, not much is known about the efficiency and effectiveness of these schemes in reducing poverty and inequality in the countries where they exist. Further, most of the schemes in place in many African countries are financed through general tax revenues but their implications for fiscal stability are still poorly understood. In the context of a financial crisis, it is likely that the scope for state provision of these protections may be constrained.

Purpose of the Consultancies
The purpose of these studies is to contribute to the bridging of the knowledge gap and to propose policies for consideration and adoption by member states on the design of social safety nets/social protection schemes. The main outcome of the studies will be to propose policies mechanisms for deploying social safety nets as an additional instrument for accelerating progress in Africa to meet the targets of the MDGs in the context of MDGs-consistent/MDGs-based national development plans. The studies will also serve as working papers for the ECA-initiated African Learning Group on Poverty Reduction Strategies and the Millennium Development Goals (PRS/MDGs-LG).

Focus of Studies
Ten African countries have been selected for this study. These are: Namibia, Mauritius, Kenya, Nigeria, Malawi, Tunisia, Algeria, Mali, South Africa and Angola. There will be one consultant per country.

Methodology
The studies shall focus on two main areas. First, they will describe the salient features of the social protection instruments and their magnitude in the selected country (Malawi). Although the instruments are targeted at diverse groups, intervention modalities and efficiency may differ as will the political and historical context that underpins the selected interventions. The studies should also examine the extent to which social safety nets are embedded in national development plans, especially with the country's medium-term expenditure frameworks (MTEF) and the mechanisms by which they are financed. There should also be a detailed description of the institutional and regulatory regimes

Second, the studies will then analyze the concrete outcomes of the social protection programme on poverty and inequality and on that basis assess the possible contribution of the schemes to the achievement of the targets of the MDGs. Some counter-factual analysis may be required. The study should also discuss the disincentive effects, if any, of the schemes and possible governance problems.

Modalities
The national consultant will conduct a desk review on the social protection schemes. The studies will provide a strong analytical basis for knowledge sharing and capacity building activities that take place under the auspices of the African Learning Group on Poverty Reduction Strategies and the Millennium Development Goals (PRSP/MDG Learning Group) at ECA and the Enhanced Knowledge Network Sharing Project, the supportive and relay instrument in-between meetings of the Learning Group. The consultancy might

require traveling to collect data and information, and limited resources are available to cover only trips.

Supervision
The consultant will work under the general guidance of the Director of the Economic Development and NEPAD Division (EDND) and the direct supervision of the Chief of MDGs & LDCs Section.

The consultants must submit his/her draft report 8 weeks after the coming into force of the contract. The final report shall be delivered no later than 2 weeks from the date that comments on the draft are received from ECA. The consultancy is not expected to last for more than 10 weeks from the date the contract came into force.

Performance indicators
1. Prepare a detailed outline of the report
Deadline: 1 week upon signing the contract
Output: An annotated outline of the report

2. Review the country experience of social protection and place this within the context of accelerating towards the MDGs presenting an annotated outline of the work to be done.

Deadline: Eight weeks after signing the contract.
Output: First draft report

3. Revise draft report to take on board comments and suggestions and submit finalized report.
Deadline: 10 weeks after signing the contract.
Output: Revised and final report.

The report and findings will be an input into the 2010 PRSP/MDGs Learning Group the consultant might be asked to present his report findings at the meeting, serve as a rapporteur at the PRSP/MDGs-LG meeting, and undertake other duties as may be assigned by the Chief of Section or his appointed representative.
Deadline: No later than December 31st 2010
Output: Participation to the activities of the Learning Group

Qualifications
Advanced degree in Economics or related field; Ph.D. preferred. Proven track record in development policy analysis and in-depth knowledge of country of interest. Ten or more years of experience in international development policy work with a focus on African development. Excellent writing and quantitative skills are also required.

Remuneration
Competitive, based on experience and evidence of previous work.

Deliverables
The Report should be presented in hard- and soft-copies with the "Economic Commission for Africa" prominently displayed on the cover. The soft-copy version shall be in MS-Word format. Neither the Report of parts thereof should be disseminated or

presented in any form without the explicit permission of the Economic Commission for Africa. Data collected during this exercise shall be the property of the Economic Commission for Africa.

Contact

For further information please contact:

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