

SOCIAL PROTECTION IN EU DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION Issues

Paper

Respondents Information:	
Your name -open reply-(optional)	Martina Weitsch
Please state your country of residence -open reply-(optional)	Belgium
What organisation do you represent? (if private citizen write 'none') -open reply-(optional)	Quaker Council for Europ.Aff.
Please choose from the following categories the most relevant to the organisation you represent. -single choice reply-(optional)	NGO
1.2 What is social protection and what can it do?	
Question 1: Social protection systems should be defined according to the priorities of national governments. -single choice reply-(optional)	Strongly Agree
Comments: -open reply-(optional)	
<p>There are compelling reasons for arguing in favour of such systems being defined according to the priorities of national governments (see below), we would wish to start by saying that the basis for any such definition must be international law, starting with Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and relevant ILO definitions. That said, we would argue that while there is a growing interest for social protection in some African (and other developing) countries, it is not necessarily directed towards the specific European brand of social protection. Particularly at a time when the whole issue of social protection is coming under a significant degree of political pressure in Europe and the developed world itself, donor countries need to show a degree of understanding that social protection has to be adapted to the context in which it is implemented. Donors, rather than setting or driving the agenda, need to become partners. They should support the design, implementation and reinforcement of home-grown social protection schemes and systems, and promote South-South exchange. What they can do effectively, and by persuasion rather than conditionality is to ensure that social protection systems are context specific, culturally sensitive, conflict sensitive (here, it is especially important to ensure that system design does not favour certain groups over others) and in line with international law. Donors often lack understanding of the domestic political processes in which their interventions are embedded, undermining the potential for ownership and sustainability of their initiatives. Rather than coming with a ready-made definition or system, donors should ensure that whatever system is developed has broad public support and effective democratic oversight. As the European Commission says in its own report: Social Protection for Inclusive Development: Traditional donor engagement - often poorly coordinated, faddish, project-based and financially unreliable - is ill- suited to furthering the social protection agenda. For example, donor-driven social transfer pilots have depended heavily on outside funding and have rarely generated political buy-in from national governments, undermining ownership and sustainability. (p.6) In their joint position for the third High Level Forum in Accra, the EU committed itself to reduce the conditions attached to their aid. We suggest that the EU ends all economic policy conditionality and continues to rely extensively on assessments and positive reviews by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, particularly when it comes to budget support. Conditionality considerably undermines the democratic space for citizens, Parliaments and CSOs to shape domestic policies. Having said this, there is also the issue of conflict sensitivity in development. For any support that is provided essentially as budget support (as would normally be the case with programmes of social protection) this is particularly relevant. In our own report on Mainstreaming Conflict Prevention in Development Assistance (http://www.qcea.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/rprt-mcp2- main-en-jan-2009.pdf) we set out the issues that can arise in terms of conflict dynamics from budget support approaches (p. 13) which are entirely relevant here: preferential treatment of certain groups over</p>	

others; a perception of unequal treatment between neighbouring countries (regional perspective) and the support of governments which do not have democratic foundations.

Question 2:

Social protection is not only about protecting people against risks but also about promoting livelihoods, participating in the economy and finding jobs.

-single choice reply-(optional)

Strongly Agree

Comments:

-open reply-(optional)

1.3. What is the EU's position on social protection?

Question 3:

The European values that are behind European social protection systems should also inform the EU's stance and action in social protection in partner countries.

-single choice reply-(optional)

Slightly Agree

Comments:

-open reply-(optional)

The critical question here would be: What values? Clearly, the EU would start with those embedded in ILO and UN frameworks. But this does not go far enough. The real problem that the EU has is that its own economic policies (the emphasis on growth for example, the significant support given to agriculture and fisheries even though such policies disadvantage the economies of third countries that are then in receipt of development assistance) at times are directly counter to the idea of removing inequality and inequity at a global level. The fact that there is a financial crisis does not make this any easier; but it is still an issue the EU needs to address if it wishes to address social protection in development on the basis of coherent and ethical policy. So whilst we agree that the European values which are behind European social protection should also inform the EU's stance on action in social protection in partner countries, this must then also apply to the extent to which the EU examines its own internal and external policies for elements which undermine development and social protection in those third countries and the EU's willingness to address these.

Question 4:

The European Social model was created for Europe in the mid 20th century, when full employment in the formal sector was the norm. However, the extensive social security systems characteristic of the European Union Member States are unsuited to the economies of emerging and developing countries, which cannot afford them.

-single choice reply-(optional)

Slightly Agree

Comments:

-open reply-(optional)

Affordability is condition for effective social protection system. The problem for any government (and by implication for any donor contributing to a social protection system in a third country) is the question of how affordability is defined and the extent to which it is undermined by extreme inequality (which has been growing globally and within both developing and developed countries). The European Union needs to address this question both internally and externally and needs to commit itself to radical steps to redress these imbalances. This is not just because greater equality is a good thing per se and ethically defensible, but also because there is clear evidence that greater inequality leads to a higher level of socially destructive outcomes on a whole range of indicators as evidenced in the ground-breaking research undertaken by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett in 'The Spirit Level' (see: <http://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/resource/the-spirit-level>)

<p>Question 5:</p> <p>Development cooperation for social protection is highly relevant for middle income countries, as well as low income countries, in order to reduce inequalities and eradicate poverty.</p> <p>-single choice reply-(optional)</p>	<p>Strongly Agree</p>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>-open reply-(optional)</p>	
<p>In the recent debates on the future of EU development cooperation, there is a clear trend towards “country differentiation”. According to this concept, the EU intends to reduce, and at the end of the day stop, allocating development funding to certain countries that are not any longer considered developing countries. Indeed, instead of spending money on development in these countries, the EU wants to foster economic and trade relations as well as foreign policy dialogue with them. As a result, the EU hopes to be able to free up development funding that can be spent in the least developed countries. This is reflected in the proposals for development cooperation for the next Multiannual Financial Framework where, for example India is going to be eligible only for regional and thematic programmes and not for bilateral programmes. But, as the European Commission’s own issues paper in relation to this consultation says: Persistently high levels of inequality in middle- income countries mean that there are now more poor people in middle-income countries than in low-income countries⁶. In fact, there are up to a billion poor people, or a 'new bottom billion', living not in the world's poorest countries but in MICs. Poverty is increasingly an issue of income and wealth inequalities, rather than average income levels. Given this recognition, the EU’s proposals for future development funding would appear to contradict this insight.</p>	
<p>Question 6:</p> <p>Social protection protects people against the worst effect of global crises (climate change, food price rises, economic downturn).</p> <p>-single choice reply-(optional)</p>	<p>Slightly Agree</p>
<p>Comments:</p> <p>-open reply-(optional)</p>	
<p>There is no reference in the consultation document to smallholders and small scale agriculture. First and foremost there is a gap between the policy and practice in terms of the EC’s commitment to a small-scale approach. We have yet to see any evidence of a shift in focus on smallholders and small-scale agriculture in practice. Moreover, the Commission has yet to acknowledge the importance of smallholder farmers as the most important private sector in developing countries (small farmers producing on two hectares or less are responsible for 90% of food grown in Africa and produce half of the world’s food supply). What do we mean by a small-scale approach? QCEA believes that strong support for sustainable and small-scale approaches to agriculture and energy are key to tackling poverty and hunger, as well as addressing climate change. Smallholders feed poor communities – including themselves – and small increases in yields on their farms could have a profound impact on poverty and access to food at the local and regional levels. The massive impacts of agriculture on the environment have, in turn, knock on effects for climate change, the most severe effects of which are felt by the poorest in the world. We would add to this a concern that the quantities in which the European Commission wishes to provide development finance mitigates against small-scale approaches; this would lead to the conclusion that funding should (and could) be made available through targeted budget support which favours national government spending in-country on small scale local production. This would not only assist poorer people more effectively than any industrial scale approaches to food production and energy generation; it would also minimise transport of food (and other) products and thus make a direct (as well as indirect) contribution to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. If we continue on the lines of ‘business as usual’ in terms of global markets and global trading, then any amount of social protection will not protect anyone from climate change, food crises or other symptoms of the evidently flawed economic system we live with.</p>	
<p>Question 7:</p> <p>Social protection can contribute to strengthening the compact between citizens and the State, and promotes social inclusion and greater accountability.</p> <p>-single choice reply-(optional)</p>	<p>Strongly Agree</p>

Comments:

-open reply-(optional)

We would strongly agree with this statement, provided that it is based on local ownership at both government and civil society levels, thus empowering civil society stakeholders. QCEA emphasises the importance of citizen and civil society engagement in integrated and coherent development of national plans, for a number of reasons: • Community interventions are capable of reaching the most vulnerable; • Working through CSOs, NGOs and faith-based organisations on the ground can ensure swift and effective responses to complement support to governments; • By harnessing community voluntarism, including through the widespread health promotion activities of faith institutions, coverage and, more importantly, usage can be significantly enhanced. In improving people's access to and effective use of social (protection) systems and services, community systems have a unique comparative advantage in advocacy, community mobilisation, system referrals, promotion and delivery of community-based services.

Question 8:

Slightly Agree

The EU is able to make a significant impact on the development of social protection, because of its own long history with social welfare and social security systems, and because the EU is the world's largest donor.

-single choice reply-(optional)

Comments:

-open reply-(optional)

We broadly agree with the analysis the European Commission puts forward in its issue paper on pages 9 and 10 which would suggest that, whilst lessons can be learned from the European experience, they must not be overstated because the context of any social protection system in developing countries will be, of necessity, quite different. What the EU can contribute here is research funding into the lessons learned and their applicability (or otherwise) in other contexts.

Question 9:

Slightly Agree

Part of the EU's comparative advantage in social protection lies in the fact that the social protection systems of the European Member States provide a wide range of models and organisational structures that other nations can learn from and from which expertise can be drawn.

-single choice reply-(optional)

Comments:

-open reply-(optional)

See our comments in response to Question 8

Question 10:

Strongly Agree

The EU Member States and the European Commission should develop a single, coherent policy framework for cooperation in social protection in order to improve the quality of their support for partner countries.

-single choice reply-(optional)

Comments:

-open reply-(optional)

This is an important step in order to be able to improve the quality of the support and to promote it among developing and donor

countries. There are a number of issues that need to be addressed in terms of a coherent policy framework in this context. Any policy framework 1. needs to ensure that the application of the policy is designed to be context specific; 2. should include Middle Income Countries in programmes which address social protection; 3. should include an analysis of social protection mechanisms and gaps in social protection in Country and Regional Strategy Papers; 4. should include specific programmes relating to social protection in annual action programmes; 5. should ensure that social protection is on the agenda of trade negotiations and political dialogue. Achievement of objectives as vast as eliminating poverty and promoting inclusive growth require an unerring commitment to Policy Coherence for Development and the coordinated and consistent use of all tools, policies and resources towards the objectives at hand. Development policies alone will not be sufficient: EU and Member States' policies in related areas, such as trade, environment, climate, energy, agriculture, migration and security and foreign policy must support - or, at minimum, not harm - national, local and regional efforts to eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development in partner countries. Under the objective of increasing the impact of EU Development Policy, the pursuit of the EU 2020 strategy and other EU interests through external action must be designed in full coherence with the development objectives and in full respect of human rights so that it is of fair and mutual benefit for both the EU and third countries. This means putting people and their rights and aspirations at the centre of policy making, political dialogue and international agreements with partner countries.

Question 11:

Strongly Agree

The EU should support cooperation between partner countries (south-south cooperation), which may provide relevant models well fitted to the needs of partner countries.

-single choice reply-(optional)

Comments:

-open reply-(optional)

2.3. How can development aid support social protection and, in particular, how can the European Union enhance its support for social protection in developing countries?

Question 12:

Slightly Agree

The EU should play a leading role in raising awareness of the role of social protection as a key driver for inclusive growth in international fora, such as the G20 and the UN.

-single choice reply-(optional)

Comments:

-open reply-(optional)

Question 13:

Strongly Agree

Social protection should be included in policy dialogue about national development plans.

-single choice reply-(optional)

Comments:

-open reply-(optional)

Question 14:

Slightly Disagree

Social transfers, including social protection benefits,

belong to the recurrent part of national budgets and should not therefore be funded by development partners such as the EU.

-single choice reply-(optional)

Comments:

-open reply-(optional)

Question 15:

Slightly Disagree

The EU should make an exception to this rule in the case of least developed countries, where donor financing may be required in the initial stages of establishing a social protection system and in fragile states where national governments are not able to deliver services.

-single choice reply-(optional)

Comments:

-open reply-(optional)

Whilst we do not disagree with the proposal that funding for social protection programmes for LICs, singling them out in this way counters the European Commission's own analysis of a need for social protection programmes in middle income countries. Even if middle income countries should be able to finance their own social protection programmes, there may still be a need for seed funding to get such a process moving.

Question 16:

Strongly Agree

Social protection programmes and policy dialogue should pay special attention to ensuring that disadvantaged groups (such as persons with disabilities) are also able to benefit from and contribute to inclusive growth.

-single choice reply-(optional)

Comments:

-open reply-(optional)

Securing women's rights should remain as an important stand at the core of EU development objectives as both a standalone and cross-cutting area of work. QCEA would be concerned if the only approach to Gender is to "mainstream". The Beijing Platform for Action and the Gender Action Plan both acknowledge the need for a two-track approach, that is, mainstreaming and targeted action that addresses gender inequalities and resources need to be provided to enable this. The 2012 World Development Report: Gender Equality and Development specifically notes that closing differences in access to economic opportunities and the ensuing earnings and productivity gaps between women and men should be a priority. It also acknowledges that women now represent 40% of the global labour force and 43% of the world's agricultural labour force. A gendered approach to Social Protection will be necessary to ensure that women are able to benefit from it. These considerations apply equally to other disadvantaged and marginalised groups including but not limited to small-holders.

Question 17:

Strongly Agree

The EU should have different approaches to supporting social protection in middle income and lower income countries.

-single choice reply-(optional)

Comments:

-open reply-(optional)

As we have said before, it is important to take account of the context in which social protection programmes are implemented. It therefore follows that the approaches in middle income and low income countries must be different. The full package of the UN social protection floor is not affordable for many LICs in Africa. Good starting points, however, would be non-contributory old age pensions, child grants or public works. More is possible if governments raise their tax/ GDP ratios or reallocate their resources within their national budgets. It is important to recognise that social protection is important as an instrument of reconciliation and state building in post conflict areas. Some countries in post-conflict situations have prioritised social protection in their PRSPs and in their National Social (or Security) Protection Strategies. And as the EU made a commitment in 2000 to mainstream conflict prevention, it is important to support such programmes provided that they achieve conflict sensitivity. It is regrettable that there is no clear reference to conflict prevention or conflict sensitivity in the issues paper. QCEA believes that if the social protection framework specifically mentioned how it could be used for peacebuilding it would become a more powerful and effective instrument for development. There can be no development without peace.

Question 18:

Strongly Agree

The EU should base its approach to social protection in partner countries on the individual country's profile and national priorities.

-single choice reply-(optional)

Comments:

-open reply-(optional)

Tailor made approach taking into account the conditions to success, like for example the institutional and administrative capacity (including institutional power balance and coordination), affordability, appropriate design, targeting and delivery in relation to costs and effectiveness. Taking account of the specific national context also increases the chances of making such programmes conflict sensitive and therefore able to contribute to peacebuilding.

Question 19:

Slightly Agree

The EU should be prepared to make a long-term financial commitment to supporting social protection in LICs.

-single choice reply-(optional)

Comments:

-open reply-(optional)

We are generally supportive of long-term financial commitments to allow proper planning; however, we believe that this should not be restricted to LICs in light of the European Commission's own analysis which suggests a need for work on social protection programmes in middle income countries.

2.4. Further key issues

i) The role of civil society

Question 20:

Strongly Agree

The EU should support the participation of representatives of civil society in the process of designing and monitoring social protection strategies and programmes.

-single choice reply-(optional)

Comments:

-open reply-(optional)

The Consultation does not define a clear role for civil society in social protection. The strategy rather sees civil society in a limited way - as watchdogs – when governments fail on human rights and democracy. We believe that civil society should be an important and strategic partner in its own right. The social protection agenda should therefore also recognize civil society as a prerequisite for long-term poverty reduction and promotion of democracy. It should, therefore, also have included the objective of improving the general conditions for civil society's work in developing countries. QCEA would like to see a social protection agenda that proactively supports and acknowledges the role of citizens and civil society as actors of change. Furthermore, QCEA would like to see a clear commitment to appropriate forms of democratic oversight, transparency and accountability of social protection systems as an absolute requirement for European Union support.

Question 21:

Slightly Agree

The private sector has an important role to play in supporting social protection by ensuring that investments create decent employment in line with the Decent Work Agenda.

-single choice reply-(optional)

Comments:

-open reply-(optional)