Family oriented policies for poverty and hunger reduction in developing countries and indicators of progress

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Introduction

1n 1990 when the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted, 43% of people in developing countries lived at or below $1.25 a day, which is an indicator of extreme poverty or the severe deprivation of not only income but also basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information (United Nations, 1995). It was largely against this background and the recognition of the strong link between poverty, unemployment, and hunger (Shah, 2010) that the MDG 1 (eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by 2015) set out to halve the 1990 poverty and hunger rates by end of 2015 as well as to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all the working age population including women and young people.

To achieve these goals many developing countries put in place poverty reduction strategies often in the context of more comprehensive versions of poverty reduction strategy papers premised on the principles of national ownership, broad-based participation, comprehensiveness, pro-poor policy outcomes and a long-term perspective on poverty reduction. There was also an increase, in regional and national commitments to social protection programmes, described as "policies and programmes that protect people against risk and vulnerability, mitigate the impact of shocks, and support people from chronic incapacities to secure basic livelihoods" (Adato & Hoddinott, 2008). These programmes have been shown to have wide-ranging benefits that include: promoting economic growth as well as access to nutrition, health services and education (Asian Development Bank, 2011). In consequence, extreme poverty was significantly reduced over the following two decades and MGD 1 was achieved five years ahead of schedule when it was reported in 2010 that the proportion of people living on less than $1.25 a day in developing countries had decreased from 47 per cent in 1990 to 22 per cent in. In the same vein, developing countries saw a 42% reduction in the prevalence of undernourishment between 1990-1992 and 2012-14 (FAO, 2015).

Despite this progress, poverty remains a key challenge in much of the developing world as shown in Table 1 below. Unemployment levels (particularly among youth) and poor job quality also remain pressing issues. According to the ILO (2016) more than 70% of workers in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa are in vulnerable employment, which includes categories of work that are highly precarious due to low-productivity, low and highly volatile earnings, and inadequate social protection. For example, between 2004 and 2010, the proportion of South Asian women in non-agricultural employment who worked in the informal sector was 83% while for men it was 82%. In sub-Saharan Africa the corresponding proportions were 74% for women and 61% of men while in Latin America and the Caribbean they were 54% and 48% respectively (ILO, 2016). By the same token, in 2015, over 60% of all labour active women in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa were engaged in the time and labour intensive, and poorly remunerated agricultural sector (ILO, 2016). Thus while the number of workers living with their families in extreme poverty have declined (UN, 2013), new estimates show that 60.9% of workers in developing countries still live on less than $4 a day. The number of people going hungry also remains disturbingly with the 13.5% of the

overall population in developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, remaining chronically undernourished (FAO, 2015).

Table 1:   Global poverty assessed with poverty line

Region	Historical			Headline	Projection
	1990	1999	2011	2012	2015
Share of population between $1.90 a day (PPP) (%)					
East Asia & Pacific	60.6	37.5	8.5	7.2	4.1
Europe & Central Asia	1.9	7.8	2.4	2.1	1.7
Latin America & the Caribbean	17.8	13.9	5.9	5.6	5.6
Middle East & North Africa	--	--	--	--	--
South Asia	50.6	41.8	22.2	18.8	13.5
Sub-Saharan Africa	56.8	58.0	44.4	42.7	35.2
Developing world	44.4	34.3	16.5	14.9	11.9
World	37.1	29.1	14.1	12.7	9.6
Millions of people below $1.90 a day (2011 PPP)					
East Asia & Pacific	995.5	689.4	173.1	147.2	82.6
Europe & Central Asia	8.8	36.8	11.4	10.1	4.4
Latin America & the Caribbean	78.2	71.1	35.3	33.7	29.7
Middle East & North Africa	--	--	--	--	--
South Asia	574.6	568.0	361.7	309.2	231.3
Sub-Saharan Africa	287.6	374.6	393.6	388.8	347.1
World	1958.6	1751.5	983.3	896.7	702.1

Source: World Bank (2016)

This persistence of poverty and hunger in developing countries has seen the international pursuit to reduce poverty remaining on the post-2015 development agenda with the Sustainable Development Goal 1 or SDG 1 (End Poverty in all its forms everywhere), aiming to[1]:

- By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than $1.25 a day.
- By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.
- Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.
- By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance.
- By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters.

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[1] http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/poverty/

- Ensure significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, in order to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions.
- Create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions.

Impact of poverty on families

In addition to its direct impact on individual family members (see Mokomane 2011), poverty endangers and disrupts family functioning which is conceptualised as a multi-dimensional construct reflected in the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of family activities and interactions such as cognitive engagement and development characteristics, physical health habits, intra-familial relationships and social connectedness, *inter alia* (Pezzullo et al, 2010; Banovcinova et al, 2014). In essence conditions required for families to be successful such stability, security, emotionally positive time together, access to basic resources, and a strong shared belief system are often lacking in the environment of poverty and, as a result, family relationships typically suffer when individuals live in poverty. For example, parents living in long-term poverty have been found to have a higher risk of domestic violence and development of various addictions and criminal behaviour. The resultant family stress from this not only has the potential to cause relationship problems and/or dissolution, but is also linked to less effective parenting: a complex notion characterised by children receiving, among other things, insufficient parental attention; lack of warmth and support; frequent coercive, punitive and inconsistent parenting; and less vocal and emotional stimulation (Kaiser and Delaney, 1996, Ahmed, 2005; Banovcinova et al, 2014). To this end children growing up in poor households experience social and health conditions that place them at risk for later academic, employment, and behavioural problems (Ahmed, 2005; Shanks & Danziger, 2011).

In an effort to meet the economic needs of all family members, parents in low-income families are also more likely to experience work family conflict, "a form of inter-role conflict in which the roles pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985:77). Among other things this conflict has been shown to perpetuate poverty and the societal inequities through, for instance, reducing the number of adults who can participate in paid work; restricting the range of jobs that people are able to take up; and making it difficult to participate in leisure and social activities—which can limit social networks, opportunities and quality of life (International Labour Organisation, 2004; Cassier & Addati, 2007). This conflict has also been associated with negative impacts in the quality of relations between spouses, and increased risk of family dysfunction (Duxbury & Huggins, 2003).

Need for family-oriented policies in developing countries

Despite the impact of poverty on family functioning the family, as a unit, has rarely been the focus of major poverty reduction policy initiatives. Often, such policies target individual family

members, particularly women and children separately. Furthermore, family-oriented policies have not been the subject of much research or documentation, particularly in developing countries[2]. It is largely against this background that in the post-2015 development agenda not only returned family policies to the centre of the social protection agenda but also underscored the need to family centred interventions as part of an "integrated comprehensive approach to development". But why are such interventions important, particularly in developing countries? The answer may lie in the fact that, unlike in developed countries where poverty is associated more with certain family characteristics such as single parenthood, urban residence, migration status, and parents' educational level (Richardson & Bradshaw, 2011), in developing countries poverty is, to a large extent, explained by structural factors, key among them being the high level of informality that characterises labour markets in these countries.

As stated earlier, informal sector workers have little or no access to formal risk-coping mechanisms such as insurance, pensions and social security arrangements to meet contingencies and eventualities such as ill health, accidents, death, and old age. Despite this, formal social security arrangements in developing countries were, for a long time, premised on the traditional ILO definition of social security provision, which presumed that the majority of the citizens had already attained a satisfactory living standard in a modern economy which social security was designed to protect (Tostensen, 2008). These systems, which are typically contributory in nature, were also individual-centred, concentrating on protecting the individual from insecurity that may affect him or her, and ignoring the common collective risks which normally befall informal sector workers in developing countries such as war, crop failure and natural disasters (Olivier et al, 2008:5). Non-contributory social protection policies and programmes, on the other hand, are rudimentary and far from comprehensive (Mokomane, 2012).

In addition to high levels of informality, another structural factor that presents poverty risks in developing countries is the weakened traditional protective mechanisms of the extended family which, through it culture of collective orientation, ensured that family members provided socio-economic support and assistance to each other. For many women in developing countries, vulnerability is aggravated by statutory and customary laws that restrict their access to economic resources and inheritance rights and essentially make many women economically dependent on their male spouses. Thus, in event of non-marriage and marital dissolution when there is no man to contribute to the household income or when women's own income is non-existent or too low to support the entire family, many of the households headed by women are left relatively poorer and vulnerable than those headed by men (Taylor, 2008). This is particularly relevant given the prevailing changes in marriage patterns in much of the developing world. These are reflected in, among others things, an increasing trend in the timing of first marriages, decrease in marriage prevalence and an increase in the proportion of unions dissolved through separation and divorce.

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[2] http://www.viennafamilycommittee.org/new/anniversary.htm

Other structural factors – women's increased labour force participation, declining fertility rates, increased migratory flows, and in some regions the HIV and AIDS crisis (Mokomane, 2012) – have created a growing demand for care not only for children, but also for older persons. To the extent that social norms continue to ascribe the traditional role of family caregiver to women – despite their increased participation in the labour market – this demand for care has particular implications for women's poverty. Mothers of young children, for example often pay high a "motherhood pay penalty" where they earn less than their childless counterparts partly due to employer discrimination and partly due to choosing "mother-friendly jobs", which in developing countries, are typically in the informal sector. Jobs in this sector however provides inferior wage and social security conditions in comparison to jobs led by men and women in formal sector work (Cameron, 2014; Samman et al, 2016).

All in all therefore, it can be argued that structural factors underlying poverty and hunger in developing countries call "for a pro-poor approach that links informality, social protection and empowerment" (Lund, 2009:74). Within the context of the SDG 1 targets, this implies delinking social security benefits from labour market status and extending coverage to poor families that have previously been excluded. This will be in line with the ILO reoriented its own definition of social security from purely individual notions of risk to include more collective and structural causes, with Recommendation 202 on national social protection floors explicitly recognising that "social security is an important tool to prevent and reduce poverty, inequality, social exclusion and social insecurity" (ILO, 2012).

Further recognising the high levels of informality, the absence or inadequacy of formal social security systems, and the formal employment basis of the present (formal) social security systems, (Olivier et al, 2008) there has been emerging calls to give more attention to the role and potential of traditional informal social security systems that have, for years, provided a protective cushion to many families in developing countries (Triegaard, 2005; Olivier et al, 2008) and ensured that:

> "There were no poor and rich; the haves helped those who were in want. No man starved because he had no food; no child cried for milk because its parents did not have milk cows; no orphan and old person starved because there was no body to look after them" (Iliffe, 1987:3)

With a focus on Southern Africa, Olivier and colleagues identified other limitations of current social security and social protection schemes implemented in developing countries as the limited concepts of "family" and "work" that are not reflective of the true concepts in these countries (see box below). To this end Triegaard, argues that more inclusive social security and social protection policies which focus "on engaging the poor with regard to informal, non-traditional and alternate forms of social security will begin to provide a more comprehensive safety net". All in all, the extension of social protection floors to all is one of the most effective ways to ensure that those living below the poverty line are able to lift

themselves and their families above any given poverty threshold, and hence attain (SDG 1 (ILO, 2016).

> - Restricted family concept: The concept of 'family', which underlies much of the formal system, is not reflective of the true family concept as found in many developing countries. The notion of 'family', as used in formal social security schemes, is by and large based on the nuclear western family concept, i.e. a couple in a monogamous union, both in formal employment, one or two children, and so forth. This is not, however, indicative of 'family' in developing countries, where extended families and, in some areas, polygamous marriages are common, especially among the rural and urban poor.
> - Limited concept of work: In their day-to-day existence, people in developing countries are joined together by what may be termed 'traditional values.' It is on account of these values (which are all about solidarity, collective responsibility, compassion, equality, unity, self-determination, human respect and human dignity) that individuals subsist as families and that families become closely interlaced communities which form a large society. These traditional values are discernable in social, political and economic activities in developing countries.

Adapted from Olivier et al (2008:3)

Given the growing demand for care, it is imperative for developing countries to enhance work-family balance by promoting an integrated, multi-generation approach to social protection that is sensitive to care responsibilities (Samman et al, 2016). This family focused approach would recognise that in addition to income to cover the cost of childcare, children need developmentally stimulating environments to thrive. Thus it is imperative to have a strong and clear linkage between social protection programmes and early childhood care and education (ECCE). The childcare programme of SOCFINAF, an export coffee producer in Kenya is a relevant example. Permanent workers –both male and female-can enrol their children aged 3 months to 6.5 years in the company's childcare centres for free. The children are provided with a range of services including two daily meals; health checks and medical treatment in SOCFINAF dispensary and district hospitals; custodial care, early child development and pre-primary education. Evaluations have revealed that workers appreciate better health and nutrition of children; report that they work without interference of childcare problems and thus can do more work and earn more; and the programme enables spouses of male workers to look for work (Hein & Cassier, 2010).

Another plausible policy regime that developing countries can adopt to enable parents – including those in the informal sector -- to effectively combine work and care, reduce the 'motherhood pay penalty' and foster pay parity is the adoption of care-related labour market policies. Examples include maternity and paternity leave, parental leave, breastfeeding and crèche provisioning. India's Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) is one successful and widely cited example in this regard. According to the SEWA's 2013 Annual report, "When SEWA organized child care for members' children on their request, women were much relieved. They said that they could now go out to work with peace of mind, earning double of what they did earlier, hence bringing more and better food into the home" (SEWA, 2013: 7).

To empower and build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations, there is need for poverty and hunger reduction policies in developing countries to have the encouragement of family capital and family resilience as integral components. These two components emphasise the importance of non-material resources which, while not easily measurable, have a significant effect on the family's ability to shape the future and empowerment of its members. The concept of family capital, for example, borrows from the literature on social capital: "those social relationships that allow individuals access to resources possessed by their associates, and to the amount and quality of those resources upon which people depend for social, economic and emotional support" (Belsey, 2005:17). Social capital has also been described as "resources embedded within a person's social network that influence decisions and outcomes by shaping a personal identity while delineating opportunities and obstacles within a person's social world" (Belcher et al, 2011:69). To this end family capital provides enabling resources and strengthens the capacity of individual family members to function and attain their current and future goals and objectives.

Family resilience, on the other hand, refers to the ability of families "to withstand and rebound from disruptive life challenges" (Walsh, 2003:1) and is especially critical for the most vulnerable individuals and families. In terms of family functioning, the vulnerable include those families that have a higher likelihood of breaking up as a consequence of external economic, social and/or political factors; families that are unable to meet the basic needs of their members in areas such as shelter, nutrition, physical and emotional care; families in which there is physical and psychological exploitation, discrimination as well as abuse of individual members; and families characterised by injustice in the distribution of rights and responsibilities of family members (Belsey, 2005:20). According to Silliman (undated:3), families and their members demonstrate resiliency when they build caring support systems and solve problems creatively. Their resilient behaviour can be reflected in the maintenance of normal development of optimism, resourcefulness and determination despite adversity (Silliman, undated; Belsey, 2005). These strengths and resources can enable individuals to respond successfully to crises and challenges, to recover and grow from those experiences, and to generally attain social and economic empowerment (Walsh, 2003).

Social empowerment refers to the capacity of individuals and groups to foster the relationships and institutional interactions necessary for their well-being and productivity (DESA, 2012; Voipio, 2012). It is closely related to social integration and poverty eradication, and is strongly influenced by individual assets (e.g. housing, livestock, savings) as well as human e.g. (good health and education), social, (e.g. social belonging, sense of identity, leadership relations), and psychological (e.g. self-esteem, self-confidence, aspirations for a better future) capabilities (GSDRC, 2012). Lastly *economic empowerment,* through which people have the "ability to make choices in what productive activities to engage in and an incest it, to decide how and when to engage in markets and to influence the terms on which they do so" (Voipio, 2012:5) facilitates poverty reduction and social integration by improving participation in economic activity and promoting productive employment and decent work.

Economically empowered people are able to think beyond immediate daily survival and they assert greater control over their resources and life choices (GSDRC, 2012).

Summary

In sum, to achieve SGD 1, family-oriented policies for poverty and hunger reduction in developing countries and indicators of progress require recognising the structural factors underlie poverty and hunger in developing countries and adopting a "pro-poor approach that links informality, social protection and empowerment" . This essentially entails:

- delinking social security benefits from labour market status and extending coverage to poor families that have previously been excluded.
- giving more attention to the role and potential of traditional informal social security systems.
- promoting an integrated, multi-generation approach to social protection that is sensitive to care responsibilities
- adoption of care-related labour market policies to enable parents – including those in the informal sector -- to effectively combine work and care
- Ensuring that poverty and hunger reduction policies in developing countries have the concepts of family capital and family resilience as integral components.

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