



## **“Social Protection and Agriculture, breaking the Cycle of Rural Poverty”**

**by Sidiga WASHI, IFHE President-Elect (2014 – 2016)**

The eradication of hunger and extreme poverty emerge as possible Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Post-2015 development era. Despite the progress made according to the MDGs achievement reports, around 780 million people in the developing countries still suffer from chronic hunger and over one billion persons are extremely poor and living on less than \$1.25 per day<sup>1,2,3</sup>.

The theme of the World Food Day 2015 is “Social Protection and Agriculture, breaking the Cycle of Rural Poverty”. The World Food Day started on October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1981 is an occasion to focus the world’s attention to the importance of eradicating poverty and hunger especially in the rural areas. The focus of this year is on the role of social protection in fighting hunger and extreme poverty and linking this dimension to agricultural production support.

According to ILO, 2014, about 73 percent of the world population have no access to adequate social protection means and in which the majority of them live in the rural areas of developing countries and dependent on agriculture to make a living<sup>4</sup>. Poor rural households are already constrained by limited access to resources, low agricultural productivity and poorly functioning markets, which reduce their ability to cope with economic and natural risks, and political insecurity that threaten their livelihoods.

Social protection exists when governments develop policies and programs to address economic, environmental and social vulnerabilities to food insecurity and poverty. Through cash transfers, vouchers, insurances and in-kind contributions, social protection programs enhance the income, status and capacities of poor and vulnerable people. Social protection improves people’s access to health care and other social services, enabling them to sustainably provide for themselves and their family members<sup>5</sup>.

In the absence of social protection, poor households, which are already constrained by limited access to resources and services, are at constant risk of hunger and poverty, especially when faced with a crisis or natural disasters. Social protection is critical in such cases because, the economic or in-kind support it provides prevents people from hunger although on the short term.

Moreover, by stimulating production, social protection provides greater income stability and ability to manage risk, thus contributing to reducing poverty and food insecurity in the longer-term<sup>6</sup>.

The Food and Agriculture Organization FAO is committed to support governments and partners in addressing the main challenges for incorporating social protection into national strategies and actions to fight hunger and in promoting greater policy coherence and synergies between social protection, food and nutrition security, agricultural development, natural resource management and rural poverty reduction. This can be done through incorporating social protection into national strategies and actions of most of the developing countries to fight hunger and malnutrition. As well it can be done by maximising synergies between social protection and agricultural policies and articulating a coordinated strategy for rural development and poverty reduction<sup>7</sup>. Moreover, by supporting governments in expanding social protection systems in rural areas and by encouraging governments and other stakeholders, including civil society organisations to develop good governance systems<sup>8</sup>.

### **The Home Economics Perspective**

In the Statement submitted by IFHE to the office of the UN Secretary General at the Commission of the Status of Women CSW, in March, 2015 it was stated that the family is seen as a group having a strong social solidarity and multifaceted functions. As such, a family needs to be protected, strengthened and empowered. In most of the developing countries and especially in rural areas, women are responsible of most of the household chores. Their tasks are multifaceted, have a high workload on managing the household, take care for children, older and handicapped persons. They have to clean house and textiles, to prepare meals and to contribute to the household production and income generation. They are facing poverty, malnutrition and exclusion.

For all the above reasons, social protection programs can effectively reduce poverty, build resilience, and help catalyse agricultural and rural development, and call for greater efforts to provide coverage for the poorest including women, especially in rural areas. If social protection, food production, food security and nutrition policies are integrated, they will help to fight hunger and extreme poverty as well as promoting rural development.

If social protection programs were properly designed, they tend to benefit women and promote their economic and social empowerment. Similarly, they can also benefit children and youth, as social protection helps improve nutrition and health outcomes in as much as household income security allows young people to stay in school longer, and cash for work programs help enhance employment opportunities for youth.

In conclusion, if women and girls receive education to improve their daily life management for the benefit of household and their communities. In addition, education in Home Economics in particular will improve food security, eradicate poverty, and improve quality of life and sustainable consumption and production of household and communities.

**References:**

1. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgsproposal>.
2. SOFI 2015.
3. World Bank, 2015, Povcalnet. (available at <http://iresearch.worldbank.org/PovcalNet/index.htm>) Accessed March 2015.
4. ILO (International Labour Organization). 2014. World Social Protection Report 2014/15: Building economic recovery, inclusive development and social justice. Geneva, ILO.
5. World Bank. 2014b. The State of Social Safety Nets 2014. Washington, DC, World Bank.
6. World Bank. 2013. Global Monitoring Report. Rural-Urban Dynamics and the Millennium Development Goals. Washington DC, World Bank.
7. Fiszbein, A., R. Kanbur & R. Yemtsov. 2014. Social Protection and Poverty Reduction: Global Patterns and Some Targets. World Development, Vo. 61: 167-177.
8. FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization). 2014. The State of Food and Agriculture: Innovation in family farming. Rome, FAO.
9. Commission on the Status of Women. Fifty-ninth session, March 2015. Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".  
Statement submitted by International Federation for Home Economics.