



Social Protection in the Middle East and North Africa - the IDRC contribution

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Outline of this presentation

What is IDRC and why our interest in SP in MENA?

**An in-house exploration, complementing UN/ESCWA
and government efforts at ISP**

Terminological confusions: delineating the field

Factual knowledge gaps and deeper unknowns

Planned outputs and timeline for the IDRC project



What is the IDRC (International Development Research Centre, Canada)?

Our mandate and operations:

'crown corporation': autonomous public body dedicated to providing research support in developing countries

'grants plus' and responsive; thematic, problem-oriented programming approach; focussed on demands on public policy

Regional presence (Cairo: MENA vs WA)

Different types of investments :

Unsolicited proposals funded through programs (majority)

In-house initiatives (least, but vital)

Implementation of co-funded projects (increasing scale)

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'Globalization, Growth and Poverty' program initiative

► GGP priorities and entry points

- Patterns and drivers of inclusive growth
- Market regulatory function of the state: how rules of trade, competition and regulation shape growth and poverty outcomes
- The design of financially viable and effective social protection systems

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Current GGP projects relevant to ISP

Global and in other regions

- ▶ Multi-dimensional poverty analysis (PEP and HDCN)
- ▶ Taxation and inter-generational transfers
- ▶ Labour markets, employment and migration
- ▶ Community-based monitoring of social programs

▶ and in MENA

- ▶ Institutional capacity building: ERF, LEA
- ▶ Growth determinants and challenges
- ▶ entrepreneurship and SMEs
- ▶ labour markets - job quality (Egypt, Jordan, Morocco)

IDRC project on social protection in MENA

A small in-house initiative over one year

Objectives

- identify specific knowledge gaps
- prioritize future research support

Activities

- bibliographic search, preparation of glossaries (English and Arabic)
- commissioned studies/literature reviews on understudied topics
- country study template (Lebanon)

Rationale for the IDRC project

- ▶ **Salience of the issue with the global recession**
- ▶ **Relative lack of factual evidence**
 - ▶ Routinely omitted from « global » studies e.g. recent Ford Foundation review
 - ▶ information gaps evident in Harrigan and El Said (2009)
- ▶ **Uneven coverage by country**
 - ▶ best studied where Social Funds established (Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Yemen) but information scope limited
- ▶ **Lack of understanding of the systemic and comparative political economy aspects of SP**

Defining terms

- ▶ **Greatly differing/confusing usages of the term “social protection”, though some convergence**
 - ▶ associated with ‘paradigm shift’?
- ▶ **Narrow definitions:** limited to public sector only (as here); or to social assistance field/development projects (private (NGOs) or public) (Africa till recently)
- ▶ **Broad definitions:** include social sector expenditures, social security, and social assistance programs and projects

Defining terms continued

- ▶ IDRC conceptualization stems from our interest in public policy but is *not* limited to public interventions
 - ▶ “Instruments and schemes in place aiming to shield people against shocks and risks, support persons/social groups with specific claims or disadvantages, and provide safety nets against destitution”
 - ▶ Key dimensions are vulnerability, new mapping and monitoring techniques, extension of entitlements over time
 - ▶ Covers public and private institutions, publically or privately funded; market or non-market based; new or “traditional”; and formal (legally recognised) or informal.

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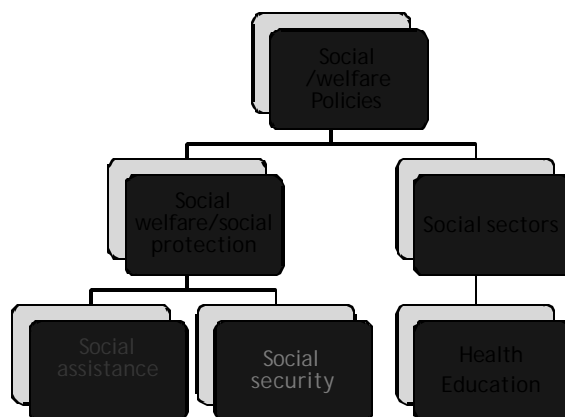
Justification for such a broad definition

- ▶ Programs and projects cannot be designed or evaluated nor their real “value added” assessed in isolation
- ▶ Gaps in the system can only be identified with knowledge of the whole
- ▶ Non-state actors’ measures
 - ▶ may be innovative, can learn from them
 - ▶ may deserve public financial support or replication
 - ▶ may be flawed or inequitable and need correction

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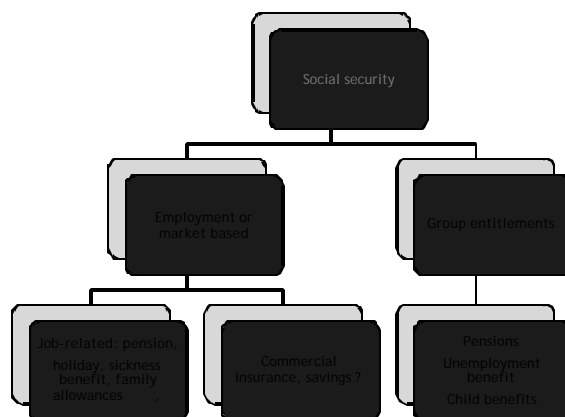


Delineation of the field 1



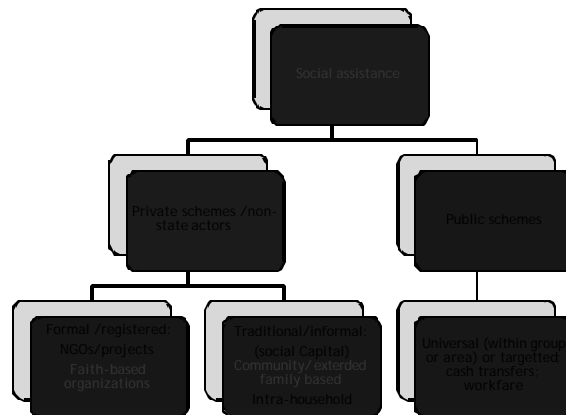
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Delineation of the field 2



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Delineation of the field 3



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MENA: known facts, uncertain prospects

- ▶ **Food and fuel subsidies**
 - ▶ MENA preferred instrument - "income support" not SP
 - ▶ Sustainability questionable, highlighting vulnerability (Egypt 20:20:20 distribution)
- ▶ **"Social Funds"- agencies to offset shocks of Structural Adjustment Programs from late 1980s**
 - ▶ 4 in MENA: Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Yemen
 - ▶ changes in mandate and functions over time?
 - ▶ are they "fit for new purposes" i.e. against shocks from increasing economic openness in the region, global crisis?
- ▶ **Still an important topic, but for a later stage**

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Factual knowledge gaps

- ▶ Uneven country coverage (partly being remedied now with ESCWA work)
- ▶ Subsidiarity: regional/municipal level activities (cf Norway) actual and potential
- ▶ Full range of measures and organizations active is not known; nor pressures from urbanization, migration, changing social structures
- ▶ Quantum of SP given by different types of organizations/structures is not known
- ▶ Resource flows, scale of redistribution not known

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Deeper unknowns

- ▶ The comparative nature of the “social contract”
- ▶ Public perceptions of rights, obligations and expectations of the following as providers of SP
 - ▶ The state
 - ▶ Private organizations
 - ▶ Private/non-formal support structures
- ▶ Value of glossaries (English-Arabic) for understanding the political philosophy of SP

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Tackling knowledge gaps and supporting policy development

Reports/literature reviews:

- faith-based and community-based measures
- country information template (Lebanon)
- Arabic and English glossaries, annotated bibliography

Workshop (Cairo, January-February 2010)

Research fund - competitive awards for MENA researchers (IDRC and perhaps other donors)

Some final words

- ▶ Watch this space: www.idrc.ca/ggp
- ▶ Join us for the workshop (Cairo, early 2010)
- ▶ Join IDRC in providing funding for more research shaped to your needs
- ▶ Support research efforts to fill knowledge gaps, improve understanding and support new policies
- ▶ CONTACT ME FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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