**Linking social protection with disaster risk management and climate change adaptation strategies with a focus on children in Latin America**

**- Concept note –**

**1. Introduction**

The negative effects of socio-natural disasters, their increasing frequency and the effects of climate change on human development – particularly for populations in situations of poverty and vulnerability – raise the need to explore the role of social protection (SP), its potential to provide a response to vulnerabilities throughout the life cycle and the linkage this sector has with disaster risk management (DRM) and climate change adaptation (CCA) strategies. It is considered that SP policies can potentially help to reduce some of the key vulnerabilities affecting poor and vulnerable populations (UNICEF, 2013).

Undoubtedly, the population groups most severely affected by natural disasters and certain effects of climate change are households in situations of poverty and vulnerability. Some of the factors influencing this vulnerability to climate change include the fact that persons in situations of poverty tend to depend upon resources that are sensitive to climate change; they do not have adequate assets to fall back on in times of crisis; they often do not have access to credit or savings; they have limited access to information and opportunities to develop new skills; and they tend to occupy the least productive lands and/or with the greatest exposure to the risks posed by climate change (Pettengel, 2010). All of the above clearly has a negative impact on these populations and particularly on the well-being of boys, girls and adolescents.

In addition, it complicates the recovery of these sectors of the population given that the effects of disasters can have more long-term consequences in various areas such as food and nutrition, health, water and sanitation, education, productivity, housing, etc., which at the same time perpetuates the situation of poverty and/or vulnerability (see Graph 1). Poor, vulnerable and/or marginalized populations have fewer possibilities, resources and knowledge to enable them to manage risks, and the effects of climate change can force them to go beyond their capacities to seek to address these impacts. This once again leaves them weakened to face future cycles of poverty and exclusion, and in the case of boys, girls and adolescents this can have a long-lasting or even permanent impact on their well-being and realization of rights.

Graph 1

*Source: prepared for this study*.

Similarly (see Graph 2), disasters and the shocks and stresses caused by effects of climate change can cause significant losses which, in turn, increase vulnerability, resulting in a downward trend of impoverishment and denial of rights (Turnbull et al., 2013:10) such as the right to life, education and water. In this sense, it could be argued that there is a vicious circle of transmission of poverty, exclusion and violation of rights and the effects and shocks caused by disasters and climate change.

Graph 2

*Source: prepared for this study based on (Turnbull et al., 2013).*

It has even been argued that there is a double injustice due to the impact climate change has on populations in situations of poverty and vulnerability and the fact that they are precisely the sectors that have the least possibility of dealing with these situations (Lo Vuolo, 2014). In this sense, it has been argued that: “The problem is not only that the effects of climate change are unequally distributed, the policies designed to address these problems can also lead to unequal distribution. This regressive tendency affects policies that seek to adapt to climate change and also those designed to halt or slow it down (mitigation)” (Lo Vuolo, 2014:16).

In particular, it is crucial to consider the adverse effects on the well-being of children (and their families) as a consequence of many of the events[[1]](#footnote-1) that have occurred over recent decades in Latin America. These include:

* **Family/social:** death of family members; alteration of family roles; dismemberment of family groups; alteration of social networks; loss of recreational spaces; increased risk of sexual abuse and family violence;
* **Health/hygiene:** deterioration of sanitary and hygiene conditions; decrease/lack of medical services; increase in disease transmission rates; mental health and psychological problems; traumas and their weakening effects; increase in rates of malnutrition and food insecurity; limited access to quality water supplies;
* **Infrastructure/assets/resources:** destruction of housing; relocation to temporary shelters with overcrowding; loss of personal belongings; loss of crops, production and income capacities; reorientation of expense priorities with reduced income; damage to public infrastructure; destruction or damage to infrastructure and fittings of schools, hospitals and health centres;
* **Education/services:** temporary suspension of classes in schools; decrease in the quality of education; school desertion; changes of school; collapse of programmes focusing on populations in situations of poverty and vulnerability;
* **Other:** increase in child labour; increase in rural-urban migration; lack of protection and security problems; loss of identity documents and/or birth certificates (at the same time affecting access to services provided).

All of the above has a negative impact on advances already achieved in the field of human development and also the possibilities for future development. This is even more alarming in light of scientific evidence indicating that climate change will increase the frequency of flooding, droughts and severe climatic events (UNICEF, 2015). The effects of disasters and climate change can also exacerbate some of the inequalities that boys and girls are faced with, given that the families of poor and vulnerable populations have less resources and mechanisms to deal with these situations (UNICEF, 2016). Regardless, boys and girls from poor backgrounds already start out at a disadvantage as they are generally located in marginal zones which are susceptible to disasters and climate change and with weak infrastructures.

From a rights-based viewpoint, States in their role as guarantors of human rights are considered to have primary responsibility for reducing disaster risk, while the international community has a duty to provide support and create an enabling environment for this obligation to be met (Turnbull et al. 2013: 2-3). Similarly, States are responsible for guaranteeing the right to protection and the right to humanitarian assistance and the United Nations system has the role of ensuring that governments guarantee those rights.

Disasters affect both the offer of State services and demand for the same. On the one hand, the ability to provide basic social services such as education, health, and water is affected; on the other hand, it has been demonstrated that disaster situations negatively affect the investments made by households relating to these same services in order to compensate the losses (UNICEF, 2014). This is a further example of the vicious cycle mentioned previously.

In light of the frequency and severity of natural disasters and the effects of climate change, it is crucial to coordinate development policies (including social protection (SP) policies) with DRM and CCA strategies in order to achieve effective resilience and responses to disaster situations. Decision-makers and the persons responsible for implementing SP policies need to coordinate with the respective national institutions and take into account the direct and indirect impacts mentioned previously.

**2. Defining certain concepts**

For the purposes of this study, **social protection[[2]](#footnote-2)** (SP) is understood as being a set   
of public and private policies and programmes aimed at preventing, reducing   
and eliminating economic and social vulnerabilities to poverty and deprivation (UNICEF, 2012:12) in accordance with the terms of UNICEF’s Social Protection Strategic Framework. In this context, SP policies that reach populations in situations of vulnerability can strengthen the capacities of families to care for their children and remove barriers to access to services before, during and after a natural disaster or humanitarian crisis.

It should be stressed that social protection is considered from a rights-based perspective in accordance with legally binding instruments of the Universal Human Rights System, and in the case of Latin America, the Inter-American Human Rights System. This rights-based approach to social protection allows linkages with other economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR) in line with the argument that:

“There is a symbiotic relationship between the right to social security or social protection and other ESC rights such as the right to enjoy the highest possible level of physical and mental health; the right to education; the right to an adequate standard of living, including the right to food, clothing and housing; the right to work and rights at work.” (Sepulveda, 2014:19).

Accordingly, social protection can often grant access to other social rights and act as a bridge to other services.

Social protection seeks to ensure an income sufficient to maintain a minimum quality of life that facilitates access to social services. In this sense, it includes three main components: non-contributory social protection (traditionally known as social assistance, which can include both universal and targeted measures); contributory social protection (or social security); and labour market regulation, which consists of regulations and standards designed to promote and protect decent work (Cecchini, et al, 2011). UNICEF’s social protection strategy focuses on social transfers, programmes that ensure access to economic and social services, social support and care services and legislation and policies to ensure equitable and non-discriminatory access by children and families to services, employment and livelihoods.

At a global level, nations have recognized[[3]](#footnote-3) that “promoting universal access to social services and providing social protection floors can make an important contribution to consolidating and achieving further development gains” (United Nations, 2012). An additional factor to take into account regarding social protection is its capacity to protect individuals against risks throughout their life cycle. These will include risks arising throughout the life cycle (specific to each age group), health, economic, socio-natural and ecological risks (Ziegler, 2016). SP policies need to address the specific vulnerabilities of boys, girls and adolescents and must have an intergenerational focus that takes into account the needs of persons throughout their life cycle. The more states can develop and/or consolidate comprehensive SP systems, the better they will be able to more effectively address the multiple vulnerabilities and violations of rights faced by children and their families and in this way grant them access to their social rights.

The concept of **resilient development** partly aims to bridge the gap between the fields of development and humanitarian action, in light of the increasingly urgent need to address the impacts of socio-natural disasters and conflicts, other socio-economic shocks and climate change by applying a more comprehensive focus. In general terms, **resilience** has been defined as:

“The capacity of social, economic and environmental systems to cope with a hazardous event or trend or disturbance, responding or reorganizing in ways that maintain their essential function, identity and structure, while also maintaining the capacity for adaptation, learning and transformation.” (IPCC, 2014: 5).

From the viewpoint of children, UNICEF defines **resilience** as:

“The ability of children, households, communities and systems to anticipate, prevent, withstand, manage and overcome cumulative stresses and shocks (e.g. natural hazards, epidemics, socio-economic instability, conflict, climate change) in ways which advance the rights of every child, with special attention to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.” (UNICEF, 2016: 2).

A child-centred approach to resilient development consists of providing boys, girls and adolescents and their families with the means they need to better prepare for and deal with crises and recover from them as quickly as possible (UNICEF, 2016). This requires an assessment of the factors leading to inequality and fragility due to socio-economic or environmental deprivation in order to break the cycle of intergenerational transmission of poverty.

UNICEF’s Strategic Plan (2014-2017) incorporates resilience as a key factor for the well-being of children. The Plan highlights the importance of UNICEF’s participation in this field and mentions that:

“There is a need for dedicated systems and capacities for effective preparedness and response, more explicit integration of humanitarian and development programming to promote resilience, and increased attention to human rights protection in emergencies.” (UNICEF, 2013).

In the specific context of social inclusion, this strategy involves UNICEF supporting countries with the design of legislation and policies to promote social inclusion that take into account the situation of children and related national and subnational monitoring systems. There is also an emphasis on developing policies and systems to combat multidimensional child poverty, address the drivers of vulnerability, build resilience to external shocks and improve humanitarian response.

UNICEF considers that systematic vulnerability reduction “provides unique opportunities to improve the links between humanitarian response and development programmes and to promote human security.” (UNICEF, 2013). This link between development (including social inclusion and protection) and humanitarian actions to foster the resilience of communities is of key importance and provides a suitable framework to promote the necessary intersectoral and inter-institutional coordination and articulation in this field.

**Disaster risk reduction** (DRR) has been defined as “a systematic approach to identifying, assessing and reducing” (UNICEF, 2016: 2) risks associated with threats posed by storms, earthquakes, droughts, floods and epidemics (UNICEF, 2016). **Disaster risk management** (DRM) “is aimed at protecting persons and their property, health, livelihoods and productive assets, as well as cultural and environmental assets, while promoting and protecting all human rights, including the right to development.” (United Nations, 2015). In relation to DRM, it has been argued that there is a need for a more holistic approach and that one of the guiding principles for these policies is that emergency planning should become less shock-driven and more informed by vulnerabilities (UNICEF, 2014: 7).

At a worldwide level, nations have adopted the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, which includes among its priority actions: understanding disaster risk; strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk; investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience; and finally enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction (United Nations, 2015). Accordingly, there are various elements and stages that must be taken into account for public policy decision-making, which at the same time requires articulation and coordination by various public sectors and non-governmental actors.

Finally, **climate change** is understood as being a change in the average pattern of weather over a long period of time, typically decades or longer (Turnbull et al., 2013: 4). The same authors consider that **climate change adaptation** (CCA) is a practice covering actions by a range of actors to manage and reduce the risks associated with changes in the climate (Turnbull et al., 2013: 4).

At a global level, the Agenda 2030 also incorporates in its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) the importance of promoting efforts by countries to “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” (Goal 1, SDG, 2015); and to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, calling for: strengthening of resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries; and integration of climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning (Goal 13, SDG, 2015). In this sense, the global agenda focuses on adaptive capacities and the importance of incorporating resilience in development strategies.

Having defined the concepts for the purposes of this analysis, it can be seen that SP, DRR and CCA policies do indeed have similar objectives, given that they seek to reduce and minimize the risks and vulnerabilities (whether environmental or socio-economic) faced by individuals throughout their life cycle which have negative effects on their present and future well-being; they pay particular attention to populations in situations of poverty and vulnerability; and they take into account the diverse needs of individuals throughout their life cycle (UNICEF, 2014). The search by governments for synergies and complementary actions provides a more adequate framework for compliance with human rights (given the interdependence of all rights and more specifically those violated due to the events considered in this analysis), with a special emphasis on poor and vulnerable populations. According to UNICEF, a comprehensive and systematic approach is precisely what allows links between the interventions by countries in these fields to mitigate negative impacts and reduce risks, particularly those faced by poorer segments of the population (including boys, girls and adolescents), in order to guarantee human rights.

**3. Reinforcing the need for linkage between social protection, disaster risk management and climate change adaptation in the region**

Policies aimed at reducing the poverty and vulnerability of wide sectors of the population need to be articulated and coordinated with resilient development policies. It is therefore important to analyse the scope for interaction and complementarity of state interventions in order to better meet the needs of these populations. At the same time, it is essential to engage boys, girls and adolescents in policy debate and action in response to climate change, given that they have a right to participate in their own development and have the capacity to perceive risks in light of their own experience (Mauger, et al., 2016). Participation by right-holders in public policies is also a crucial means of promoting the rights agenda.

Meanwhile, social protection has assumed a central role in national social development policies in recent years, given that “it can play a pivotal role in relieving people of the fear of poverty and deprivation, delivering on the promises of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” It has been argued that “the extension of social protection, drawing on basic social floors, is a missing piece in a fairer and inclusive globalization” (ILO, 2011: xxiv). Latin America has been a particularly innovative region for the implementation of a wide range of non-contributory SP programmes and expansion of their coverage. Trends in the field of social protection in the region reinforce the need to advance towards comprehensive SP systems that articulate and coordinate the different schemes (contributory and non-contributory SP and labour market regulation) and seek to integrate the multiple programmes and tools available.

This change in approach requires us to break down the silos separating the efforts made by different sectors in these countries to achieve social development of the population, which also involves a reassessment of the very concept of poverty and social exclusion in the region. There is a marked recognition in Latin America of the multidimensional nature of poverty and the factors that lead to the social exclusion of many of its inhabitants. This means that public policies in this field need to be approached with an intersectoral and inter-institutional focus that emphasizes rights and their interdependence. In this sense, many countries in the region have designed and/or implemented multidimensional poverty indices. This allows incorporation in poverty measurements of non-monetary dimensions such as education, health, housing, basic services, work, food and so on. It should be highlighted that this more holistic approach has also been incorporated in DRR and CCA strategies to address the multiple dimensions of vulnerabilities.

UNICEF emphasizes the need to promote inclusive social protection that is responsive to different dimensions of exclusion and their manifestations, as well as fostering an intergenerational approach (UNICEF, 2012). It is considered, therefore, that public SP policies should accompany individuals throughout their life cycle and address the risks and vulnerabilities characteristic of each stage, meaning that a more long-term focus is required. This raises the need for SP policies and programmes that also take into account the well-being of boys, girls and adolescents. The starting point in this sense is the Convention on the Rights of the Child, according to which the States Parties undertake to recognize for every child the right to benefit from social security, including social insurance, and to take the necessary measures to achieve the full realization of this right in accordance with their national law (Article 26).

Similarly, it has been emphasized (Cecchini et al, 2011) that SP measures must be comprehensive, intersectoral and adaptable and managed as part of social protection and systems, rather than through isolated programmes and interventions. Regarding adaptability, it has also been stressed (UNICEF, 2012) that a multidimensional approach to poverty requires SP policies that address not only current status but also factors that determine potential future poverty and deprivation.

In light of the challenges that the frequency and intensity of disasters pose for SP policies and the potential cost of not taking into account these vulnerabilities, SP can contribute to the CCA and the DRR agenda through its three main functions: prevention, protection and promotion (Kuriakose et al., 2012). This is applicable in both the short and long term, and particularly in relation to children, given the impact that these events can have on the well-being and enjoyment of rights of boys, girls and adolescents. Some authors (Davies et al., 2009) introduce elements for incorporation of adaptation in the different modes of social protection (see Table 1).

Table 1

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| SP category | SP instruments | Adaptation and DRR benefits |
| Provision (coping strategies) | * social service provision * basic social transfers (food/cash) * pension schemes * public works programmes | - Protection of those most vulnerable to climate risks, with low levels of adaptive capacity |
| Preventive (coping strategies) | * social transfers * livelihood diversification * weather-indexed crop insurance | - prevents damaging coping strategies as a result of risks to weather-dependent livelihoods |
| Promotive (building adaptive capacity) | * social transfers * access to credit * asset transfers/protection * starter packs (drought/flood resistant) * access to common property resources * public works programmes | - promotes resilience through livelihood diversification and security to withstand climate related shocks.  - promotes opportunities arising from climate change |
| Transformative (building adaptive capacity) | * promotion of minority rights * anti-discrimination campaigns | - transforms social relations to combat discrimination underlying social and political vulnerability |

*Source: Davies et al., 2009.*

Along the same lines, it has been argued that social protection can create a buffer to build adaptive capacity, allowing families to better absorb external shocks and enhancing the adaptive capacity of both households and institutions by providing a systematized framework.

As part of the efforts to link SP, DRR and CCA agendas and complement interventions in these sectors, the concept of ‘adaptive social protection’ has been developed. This consists of a new, integrated approach to reduce the vulnerability of poor people and develop an understanding of the interlinked nature of the shocks and stresses that poor people face today, which can (Béné, 2012):

* Transform and promote livelihoods.
* Target communities with tailored assistance.
* Incorporate a rights-based rationale for action.
* Introduce a longer-term perspective for SP and DRR interventions.
* Enhance co-working between the natural and social sciences when designing SP, CCA and DRR interventions.
* Introduce an SP metric for evaluating the ‘resilience building’ component of programming approaches.

SP, DRR and CCA policies all recognize the importance of opting for longer-term state interventions and not merely addressing vulnerabilities and risks in the short term. To promote linkage of social protection with humanitarian action, the Social Protection Strategic Framework (UNICEF, 2012: 89-90) proposes a phased approach to social protection within disaster risk management consisting of three phases (see Graph 3): pre-crisis (preparedness and risk management); during a crisis (emergency response and early recovery); and post-crisis (recovery and disaster risk management). Throughout these phases, SP programmes can help to strengthen livelihoods, increase households’ resilience, adapt interventions to specific crises, highlight the need for long-term development responses, contribute towards building resilience, support livelihoods, strengthen social cohesion of the communities affected, secure social assets and grant access to other state services.

**Graph 3**

*Source: prepared for this study* *based on (UNICEF, 2012)*.

Social protection (both contributory and non-contributory) “can offer coverage against   
risk and adversity throughout people’s lives” (UNDP, 2014: 6) and can provide a predictable layer of support for families, putting them in a better position to deal with some of the shocks caused by natural disasters and the effects of climate change. As a consequence, they can help households “avoid selling off assets, taking children out of school or postponing necessary medical care, all detrimental to their long term well-being.” (UNDP,2014: 6). This can accordingly help families, including boys, girls and adolescents, to better buffer themselves against external shocks at a household level. Similarly, many of the systems, mechanisms and distribution networks used by SP programmes may be useful when responding to emergencies, and also for risk management and preparation against risks.

Some elements of CCA and DRR strategies that may be incorporated in SP programmes include: fostering investment in greater diversification of crops and livelihoods; storage of assets; promotion of awareness and education regarding climate change and adaptability in transfer programmes; meeting the care needs of boys, girls and adolescents; increasing cash transfers for certain periods; provision of social pensions for the elderly during crises; and linkage of emergency or temporary public works programmes with reconstruction following crises or environmental and conservation efforts. On many occasions, these latter areas require planned coordination and articulation between various sectors and institutions and the needs and knowledge of local actors must be taken into account. By focusing on the needs of families in situations of poverty and vulnerability and aiming at securing the incomes of those families, the majority of the interventions mentioned also have a positive impact on the well-being of boys, girls and adolescents.

Apart from the above, other ways SP systems may be useful to meet the needs of those affected by crises include (PMA, presentation 2016): via vertical expansion that increases the value or duration of the benefit for current beneficiaries; via horizontal expansion to increase coverage and meet the needs of persons affected who were previously not beneficiaries; *piggybacking* on the pre-existing infrastructure/platform of a social programme; using a shadow alignment, whereby the humanitarian response system functions in parallel, seeking to align itself as much as possible with the current or future SP system; and finally, retargeting and reprioritization to take into account those most severely affected.

In addition, in order to contribute to resilient development efforts through social policies, it has been argued that it is necessary to have sufficiently flexible and scalable SP systems in order to efficiently address the expansion of transfers and/or users in emergency situations. However, care must also be taken not to overload SP systems (World Bank, 2011). It should also be recognized that non-contributory SP cannot provide a solution to all existing socio-natural problems, and that the focus of social policies and their intersectoral links must be maintained at all times.

Another opportunity exists for interaction to link SP and resilient development areas in relation to the new needs of the labour market in response to climate change and green economy. In cases in which the subsistence and livelihoods of individuals depend on practices that are considered to be harmful to the environment, efforts must be stepped up so that they can acquire other capacities (ILO, 2016). However, it is essential to ensure that these new sectors of the economy can guarantee adequate social protection for individuals making this transition. It has been argued (ILO, 2016) that social protection can compensate losses due to the effects of climate change and the adverse impacts of certain green economy policies in the labour market. Furthermore, in light of the efforts by various governments to reduce/eliminate fossil fuel subsidies, social protection can protect populations in situations of poverty and vulnerability.

On the other hand, a resilience agenda requires an understanding of the different factors that influence generation of disasters and the effects of climate change. It is vital for this analysis to take into account the rights, priorities and specific experiences of boys, girls, and adolescents regarding the impact of disasters and the effects of climate change. In this sense, “Governments and institutions are coming to realize that security, poverty reduction and prosperity will depend on the integration of climate change adaptation strategies in all sectors, and their implementation at all levels” (Turnbull et al., 2013:5), with priority being given to populations in situations of vulnerability. There has also been discussion regarding the social construction of risk, according to which certain social agents contribute to the creation of risk contexts and environments and are also seen as being responsible for failure to incorporate risk variables in territorial planning and development instruments (Berrenchea, 2016).

A related aspect is the importance of information systems and the need for solid systems that allow a certain degree of interoperability. UNICEF considers it to be crucial to “establish coordination processes for the gathering, processing and administration of information” (UNICEF, 2011); and to promote “implementation of targeted actions to reduce the factors underlying risks and address disasters with a child-centred approach” and “adequately understand the needs of children in terms of humanitarian aid and reconstruction” (UNICEF, 2011). Once again, systems are required that also take into account the particular characteristics and priorities of children, which also points to the need for greater disaggregation, a crucial factor for a rights-based focus that allows visualization of vulnerabilities.

The Sendai Framework mentions the need to share government responsibilities at different levels, and also between the different sectors, institutions and stakeholders involved. In order to invest in disaster risk reduction for resilience. The Sendai Framework also recommends strengthening the design and implementation of inclusive policies and social safety-net mechanisms, integrated with livelihood enhancement programmes and access to services in areas such as health-care, housing, education and food to find durable solutions in the post-disaster phase and to empower and assist people disproportionately affected by disasters.

Although considerable advances have been made in the region to link SP systems with resilient development efforts, there are still gaps and challenges in relation to the articulation and coordination of these policies. The links are often merely incidental (UNICEF, 2014), which does not necessarily lead to the development of articulated and coordinated policies that enhance their potential impact.

Apart from the challenges existing to link these action areas, there may also not necessarily be an appropriate political framework. There is deemed to be “a limited level of political mobilization by states in the region to choose immediate measures and to assume the corresponding economic expenses with the aim of strengthening social protection systems” (Vargas, 2015:304). An interesting analysis of the relationship of these different public policy areas concluded that “in the same way that economic and social protection institutions must adapt to climate change, the policies linked to climate change must also be integrated in these systems in a consistent manner.” (Lo Vuolo, 2014:29).

The less fragmentation of programmes and institutions, the greater the possibility of increasing the capacity for risk management (World Bank, 2012). In this sense, given that these sectoral policies are aimed at the same populations in situations of vulnerability, which in many cases have access to similar and complementary instruments, better articulation and coordination of these interventions could avoid duplication of efforts and result in more sustainable solutions over time, thereby enhancing the efficiency of government actions.

The approach to linkage between SP and resilient development policies must have an intersectoral focus that incorporates all the relevant stakeholders. It is therefore essential to recognize and clearly establish the State’s responsibility as the guarantor of rights, and the role of governmental institutions to address the multiple factors causing vulnerability and exposure to disasters and climate change, along with the different causes of poverty in all its manifestations. The institutions and stakeholders involved must take into account a wide range of factors and dimensions for political decision-making processes. A key element in this scenario is the creation of an adequate political and regulatory framework that allows a common understanding regarding the multitude of transversal elements and the interactions between them (Turnbull et al., 2013), particularly the involvement of institutions working in favour of children.

**4. Latin America: some examples of linkage between social policy and resilient development efforts**

Various cases of resilient development in Latin America have been outlined below (see Table 2)[[4]](#footnote-4) to demonstrate some of the efforts made in the region to advance towards a more active role for social policy, particularly in relation to the SP programmes implemented via social development ministries.[[5]](#footnote-5) As can be seen, Latin America has innovated significantly in terms of the design and expansion of non-contributory SP schemes and multifaceted approaches to poverty.

**Table 2**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Country | Initiatives |
| Argentina | The Ministry of Social Development has adopted comprehensive management of emergencies in all their phases (MDS Argentina, 2016). Services are provided pre-crisis (increasing emergency stocks, intervention protocols, training of human resources, alliances with social organizations, CICs and CDRs), during crises (articulation with local government, basic response resources, reconstruction to enable return to homes, social registries, accompaniment and presence) and post-crisis (urgent assistance, tax benefits, reinforcement of social schemes, Social and Healthcare Train, Mobile CICs). |
| Brazil | When the Brazil without Misery Plan was introduced, it was agreed that it would be coordinated by the Ministry of Social Development in coordination with 22 sectoral ministries and other stakeholders. Apart from more widely-known programmes such as the Bolsa Familia (a conditional cash transfer), the Brazil Without Misery Plan includes initiatives such as the Bolsa Verde to remunerate families that carry out environmentally sustainable productive activities, which is coordinated by the Brazilian Ministry of Environment in collaboration with various other sectors. Similarly, the Water for All Programme was also incorporated, which helps to promote food security and productive inclusion of populations in semi-arid regions and regions that suffer prolonged droughts. Meanwhile, the Brazilian Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS) organizes social assistance services in Brazil and articulates government actions at different levels to guarantee social protection of individuals, families and communities in situations of vulnerability. Apart from basic protection, the services provided by the SUAS incorporate elements relating to protection in the event of public disasters and emergencies (MDS Brazil, 2016). |
| Chile | The Ministry of Social Development is responsible for administering and coordinating with municipalities the application of the Basic Emergency File (FIBE), which allows recording of information on family groups in the context of emergencies, disasters and catastrophes and prioritization of state responses to aid the families affected. This instrument provides the government with a more agile and precise social diagnosis (MDS Chile, 2016). At the same time, the tool also assesses the position of especially vulnerable population groups affected (pregnant women, persons with disabilities and chronic illnesses) to facilitate deployment of specialized public services. It also analyses family composition and the impacts on housing, labour and basic needs (water, food, medicine) detected. |
| Ecuador | The government of Ecuador addresses the social dimension of reconstruction through recovery of livelihoods with a focus on rights and access to services (MCDS, 2016). Social policy management in the event of disasters consists of four stages: 1) Clearing of rubble (damage evaluation and Single Registry of Victims); 2) Stabilization of livelihoods (reconstruction of social and community infrastructures, conditional cash transfers, protection of the population, emerging work and re-establishment of employment); 3) Local recovery (social recovery with a rights-based focus, strengthening of capacities for labour insertion, development of inclusive markets); and 4) social reintegration and inclusive growth (development of capacities, good governance). |
| El Salvador | The Social Development and Protection Act establishes the framework for implementation of social protection in El Salvador with a rights-based focus and incorporates establishment of the National Social Development and Protection System. It also contemplates the creation of a Universal Social Protection System as a means of governmental coordination of SP programmes. This aims to grant security to individuals to help overcome the risks and challenges they face throughout their life cycle, particularly for those persons who lack contributory social security and those in conditions of economic, social and environmental vulnerability (Section 27). |
| Guatemala | In the field of social protection, the Social Development Act passed in 2011[[6]](#footnote-6) contains two sections relating to disaster risk reduction (sections 37 and 38), which establish an intrinsic relationship between development planning and reduction of vulnerability to threats. In compliance with the Social Development Act, in 2002 the Social Development and Population Policy was approved, which has among its aims the prevention and reduction of disaster risk. In addition, under Ministerial Agreement 82-2012, the Institutional Response Plan (IRP) was created with the aim of providing tools to allow for social support in the event of emergency or disaster situations. |
| Dominican Republic | The Single Beneficiary Identification System (SIUBEN) is one of the pillars of SP policies in the Dominican Republic (Vice Presidency RD, 2016). It provides support for prevention and mitigation of disasters in the event of natural phenomena for preservation of lives and assets in more vulnerable households. It also includes a Multidimensional Poverty Index (IPM) and an Index of Vulnerability to Climatic Shocks (IVACC). This latter index calculates the probability that a household will be vulnerable to hurricanes, storms and flooding due to certain socio-economic characteristics. It also takes into account the following dimensions and vulnerability factors: characteristics of the household, income and proximity of the house to a source of danger. Both the SIUBEN and the IVACC provide strategic inputs for national plans developed by the government for prevention, mitigation and response to disasters by focusing state actions on more vulnerable households and optimizing resources. |

Despite certain advances of the SP agenda in the region to incorporate elements of the resilient development agenda (more specifically certain specific DRM and CCA components) and advances in the regulatory and institutional framework of social protection to incorporate these elements, important challenges remain to link non-contributory SP actions with DRM and CCA strategies, particularly in an operational sense. Similarly, there is still much to be done in terms of research as to how these policy areas can be linked[[7]](#footnote-7).

In this sense, many of the barriers to greater integration of these sectors are due to institutional factors (financing, lack of institutional capacities or overloading of government employees, existence of diverse coordination mechanisms, lack of clarity of specific roles), certain political factors (lack of political agreement to implement the resilient development agenda and link it to other relevant sectors such as social protection, lack of recognition of emergency situations at a national level and competencies between sectors) and other technical factors (e.g. lack of mutual knowledge among sectors regarding vulnerability, risks and other elements).

Similarly, it is essential for UNICEF to specify in practice how the rights and priorities of boys, girls and adolescents are realized in this drawing together and linkage of the non-contributory SP sector with DRM and CCA strategies. This is an agenda that could be explored more closely in order to further advance in the region.

**5. Final considerations and recommendations**

Given the frequency and number of emergencies caused by natural disasters and climate change, there is an urgent need for integrated implementation of measures in all areas, including social protection.

Both the practices of countries and their regulatory and strategic frameworks clearly demonstrate that social policies applied through non-contributory SP programmes can contribute to the DRR and CCA agenda, and these action areas need to be better articulated and coordinated. However, this cannot be achieved with SP policies alone and we must be careful not to over-extend responsibilities in this field and the SP programmes themselves. Social protection can form a part of multisectoral efforts to address the challenges arising due to climate change and natural disasters.

From the specific viewpoint of children, it is crucial to ensure linkages between these areas so that the impacts of climate change and natural disasters do not affect the well-being of boys, girls and adolescents (in the short, medium and long term and permanently in some cases), as in the case of comprehensive protection of children, economic, social and cultural rights and access to other rights. In light of the interdependence of the factors causing vulnerability and the multiple dimensions of poverty (particularly in relation to children), from a rights-based perspective the actions by the State as guarantor of those rights should be directed towards articulation and joint planning of solutions.

As has been argued, the diverse functions of social protection can play a key role in advancement of the resilient development agenda. Important aspects in this respect include child-centred programmes and tools that focus on breaking the vicious circle of poverty and vulnerability, productive inclusion of households and accompaniment throughout the life cycle; and in general, the possibilities non-contributory SP offers as a gateway providing access to enjoyment of rights.

It is crucial to emphasize the need for greater and more extensive linkage of SP and resilient development policies. At the same time, this requires clear delimitation of the responsibilities of the different institutions, stakeholders and governmental levels. Fragmentation in the implementation of programmes and the provision of services by the State can weaken their impact and hinder accountability. .

At the same time, a need has been identified for SP systems to be sufficiently flexible to enable scaling of programmes and/or tools in disaster and crisis situations where necessary. However, it is also necessary to anticipate the possibility that there may be contradictions between the scales determined by non-contributory SP policies in these countries, DRR and CCA on the one hand, and/or the long or short-term motivations.

At the same time, we must take care that when incorporating new elements regarding adaptability to climate change and natural disasters in social programmes such as conditional cash transfers, the conditions for populations in situations of poverty and vulnerability are not made even more demanding (without entering into the debate regarding the very existence of such conditions).

In this context, certain actions have been identified which, in light of the aggregate value of UNICEF activities under the child rights agenda, could be adopted to advance towards a regional work agenda:

**Advocacy, diffusion and awareness raising efforts regarding linkage between poverty/vulnerability and the effects of natural disasters and climate change**, with a particular focus on the negative impact on the well-being of boys, girls and adolescents and denial of their rights. This exercise should be carried out at a political and technical level in countries to promote greater articulation and coordination of the sectors involved with a particular focus on the needs and experiences of boys, girls and adolescents, and to achieve greater consensus regarding the terminology used for their description. This does not necessarily involve establishing new systems nor do we have to reinvent the wheel; we simply need to improve articulation of existing systems and mechanisms, share information and foster greater flexibility under existing programmes.

**Support for governments to orient actions towards linkage of both action areas in compliance with international frameworks** (with the collaboration of other UN agencies). It should be taken into account that in many cases countries will be addressing international commitments via intersectoral boards and/or planning commissions. Many countries are in the process of updating their national development plans in accordance with the Agenda 2030. To start with, actions may be channelled in relation to:

- Agenda 2030. Under SDG 1: Building the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reducing their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters. Under SDG 13: Adoption of urgent measures to combat climate change and its effects, including: strengthening of resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries; and integration of climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.

- Sendai Framework: Emphasizing specific vulnerabilities of children, prioritizing data disaggregation, promoting social services as opportunities to reduce vulnerability and risks, fostering importance of safe schools and education for DRR, and finally strengthening the capacities of countries (UNICEF, 2016).

**Fostering of links between some of the components of non-contributory SP and poverty reduction strategies and resilience elements.** UNICEF places special emphasis on fostering policies with a child-centred approach. This could include the following:

* Support for inclusion of a focus on children’s rights in the guidelines and operational rules of programmes that form part of SP systems.
* Family accompaniment components that focus on families and their particular characteristics could draw on exercises and training already being implemented by DRM networks and civil defence organizations. This would allow inclusion of key elements of the DRM and CCA agenda, taking into account the needs of families with boys, girls and adolescents, the different denials of rights and priorities to foster resilience.
* The productive inclusion and financial inclusion and education components of SP strategies will also benefit from the incorporation of resilience and adaptability elements. Productive inclusion components could be linked with actions to adapt to climate change and diversification of livelihoods, among others. These programmes aim to strengthen productive capacities and accumulation of family assets, which also leads to an increased impact on children’s well-being.
* Cash transfer programmes could include elements to foster actions for mitigation of climate change, food security and nutritional security, among others. Similarly, it is important to analyse the possibility of incorporating elements for greater scalability, coverage and flexibility of cash transfers in the event of emergencies.
* Infrastructure/housing components of the SP sector need to emphasize improvements that take into account phenomena such as natural disasters and the long-lasting effects of climate change, with a specific emphasis on the needs of boys, girls and adolescents in relation to housing and public spaces.
* The operational manuals for the different SP programmes and those aimed at social workers or family agents could include essential elements of the resilient development agenda and incorporate specialized knowledge of the civil defence sector and emergency networks in the country in question, with a specific focus on the vulnerabilities of children.
* State purchases of food from small local producers could be fostered, which at the same time helps to generate income for these small producers and their families. It also formalizes their situation (social security), as well as giving them an opportunity to incorporate sustainable practices and crop diversification.
* Analysis of the role of care programmes/systems under the SP agenda in emergency situations.
* Promotion of data disaggregation by age group, sex and disability and inclusion of this disaggregation in risk analysis, registries of losses or damage and databases.
* Provision of technical assistance regarding linkage of SP, DRM and CCA agendas and processes to redesign or reform regulatory and/or institutional frameworks (national legislation, regulations, strategies and plans, among others) in the fields in question.

**Support for the establishment/strengthening of information systems and fostering of greater linkage between different systems**. Analysis of single registries of beneficiaries/participants and where possible generation of emergency modules and means of improving integration with other social programme registers. In targeting processes, variables could be included for geographic prioritization of the population such as vulnerability to droughts and flooding, along with elements that take into account the specific vulnerability of boys, girls and adolescents. Development of vulnerability maps and profiles according to the different types of possible events (floods, droughts, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions) should be promoted, along with specific adaptation to the needs of children. The topic of interoperability of information systems and the different poverty, risk and vulnerability tools and maps should also be addressed.

**Support for governments and key stakeholders to foster** **training for the sector that provides SP services to ensure incorporation of resilience elements in strategies and interventions for poor and vulnerable populations, with a special focus on boys, girls and adolescents.** The possibility of articulating previously existing efforts by institutions and civil defence networks to train employees of other national agencies could be examined. In addition, it is important to foster training of the staff that will implement and design SP programmes, including social workers and managers, who are often the ones that reach families and households in situations of poverty and vulnerability and provide support to these families. In this sense, the training could be oriented towards incorporating risk management plans that include the rights of boys, girls and adolescents before, during and after emergencies. Training of social workers and managers must be carried out in accordance with response protocols and identification of vulnerabilities in the event of emergencies. Social agents should also be incorporated in these training activities.

**Promotion of the role of local stakeholders and communities** **and fostering of links between action areas via** **regional or municipal development boards**. Existing UNICEF programmes at a community and local level could be exploited to incorporate this link between SP, DRM and CCA (and this could be prioritized in zones such as the Dry Corridor, for example). The possibility exists of fostering greater flexibility regarding the funds approved by municipalities and national development boards in emergency situations and natural disasters. Some of the resilience criteria could be incorporated in loans to these local stakeholders in emergency situations. Similarly, examples exist of stimuli for the public management of local governments working on social projects to foster offer instead of demand. In this sense, ‘municipal seals’ could be granted and used as an incentive.

**Fostering of a participatory approach, particularly for boys, girls and adolescents, so that they may offer their own experiences and perceptions regarding vulnerabilities and risks.** From the viewpoint of rights and equity, it is crucial that the subjects of rights participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes and identification of vulnerabilities and risks.

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1. La Niña in Bolivia (2007-2008); the earthquake in Chile (2010); the eruptions and tropical storm in Guatemala (2010); the hurricane in Nicaragua (2007); the earthquake in Peru (2007); and the Dry Corridor in Central America. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This study focuses on linkage of non-contributory SP with DRM and CCA strategies. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Resolution A/RES/67/164: Human rights and extreme poverty (2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Various of these examples have been taken from presentations by social development ministries during a CEPAL Seminar entitled “Optimizing the response in emergencies from a social perspective” held in Santiago de Chile on 22 June 2016; in the case of El Salvador and Guatemala they are the result of a field visit as part of a project by UNICEF LACRO (August-November 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. As mentioned previously, this study has focused on non-contributory social protection for the purposes of linkage with DRM and CCA strategies. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. For more information go to: <http://www.unicef.org/guatemala/spanish/LeyDesarrolloSocial.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. By way of example, a recent study (Solórzano, 2016) regarding a coastal zone in Mexico analysed the link between the Oportunidades programme (a conditional cash transfer) and the capacity of the participants under the programme to deal with an event such as a hurricane. According to the results, the Oportunidades programme helped to ensure the resilience of the families participating, given that the immediate monetary funds secured their short-term consumption during and after the climatic shock (Solórzano, 2016:19). This programme also assisted in the recovery stage and prevented the participating households from using strategies to address the crisis that later prove to be harmful, such as sale of productive assets, pawning of assets and reducing consumption of nutritional food to access immediate funds. At the same time, the programme appeared to enhance the capacity to stabilize short-term consumption and income-generating efforts by these households as preventive strategies. This study also reveals a key conclusion (Solórzano, 2016:27): Oportunidades did not necessarily foster users' capacity to adapt, but rather their capacity to deal with the situation (Solórzano, 2016:27), and the interaction between Oportunidades and resilience is only present in relation to prevention, in that it enhances self-insurance mechanisms (Solórzano, 2016:39). Finally, it is argued that a highly relevant factor to increase resilience was the complementary nature of other programmes, services and sources of income (Solórzano, 2016:39). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)