

Social protection and hunger eradication

At the third Financing for Development Summit in Addis Ababa in July 2015, the 3 Rome-based food agencies, FAO, IFAD and WFP, tabled a joint paper on the cost of hunger eradication by 2030. What was particularly significant was that they advocated the use of targeted social protection programmes, especially cash transfers, to spearhead hunger reduction efforts in both rural and urban areas. This represents a fundamental shift in the strategies adopted by the agencies towards hunger reduction from one that has been essentially based on the implicit assumption that agricultural development will lead to a reduction in the number of hungry to one that acknowledges that hunger in a world of adequate food supplies is a consequence of the inability of very poor families to acquire the food that they need for a healthy life.



Sometimes it is instructive to look back at the ways in which ideas shift over time, moving from the intellectual fringe towards the mainstream of conventional wisdom. Frédéric Dévé has been one of several tireless advocates for the use of cash transfer programmes as the centrepiece of international efforts to end hunger. Now that these ideas seem to be “coming of age”, and the goal of eradicating hunger by 2030 seems to be assigned high priority amongst the emergent Sustainable Development Goals, it seems opportune to re-publish a couple of his earlier articles on the subject. Since he wrote these in 2009 and 2012, a great deal of evidence has emerged of the immense power of targeted cash transfers in reducing hunger and poverty and contributing to narrowing the income gap between rich and poor, justifying many of his earlier claims that were based more upon intuition than hard figures!

Now the challenge is to translate these understandings into practical action as quickly as possible to end the greatest injustice of our time.”

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