



# Back to basics: towards integrated social protection for vulnerable groups in Vanuatu

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The impact of the recent global economic crisis on vulnerable populations around the world led to an increased focus on social protection systems in developing countries. This article argues that the availability of both formal and informal social protection systems provides potential for an integrated approach to mitigating social risks for developing societies such as Vanuatu. The ranking of Pacific island countries on the global Social Protection Index (SPI), which measures levels of formal social protection, does not take into consideration the existence of informal social protection systems that are community and culture-based and more extensive in reach. Formal social protection systems are very limited in reach in Vanuatu and even urban employees who have access to them still rely on informal mechanisms. The dynamic engagement between the customary and market sectors makes an integrated social protection approach relevant.

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Until recently, social protection has often been overlooked as an important component of the mainstream development discourse in the Pacific. The need to respond to situations of growing impoverishment and socioeconomic risk has prompted the need to identify alternative approaches of formal and informal means of social protection that are deemed more culturally and socially appropriate. This article argues that the

socio-cultural relations specific to semi-subsistence economies such as those in the small Pacific island states are still important in providing the social protection mechanisms that are necessary in responding to social risks. Because these societies are in a state of transition, where subsistence and market systems engage in diverse ways, customary and formal systems of social protection often interrelate in a manner



shaped by planned and sometimes spontaneous responses to existing and emerging socioeconomic conditions.

The recent global economic crisis provoked heightened alert by international agencies such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to how it affected the most vulnerable communities in developing countries and possible means of mitigation. Consultations were held and technical and research papers and programs were put together to identify the most effective means of mitigating the potential social risks facing the most vulnerable. The question as to who are the most vulnerable is central to the issue of social protection but is often ignored in mainstream development discourse.

While Vanuatu's macroeconomic performance and growth have attracted significant attention and debate (Duncan 2008; Henckel 2006; Howes and Soni 2009; Hughes and Sodhi 2006, 2008), the issue of social protection has, by and large, been neglected by scholars, yet it deals with a very important aspect of people's socioeconomic well-being. In policy terms, economic growth is not the natural antithesis of social protection; both can sustain and energise each other as components of a development strategy. Social protection can help rejuvenate the labour market and growth can provide the conditions to pull people out of poverty. Those who do not benefit from growth will rely on social protection for risk mitigation. Both can be used as tools for poverty reduction. Creating a durable and effective social protection system is not easy because it needs financial and human resources, effective planning and appropriate response and coverage mechanisms.

Social protection can be formal or informal. This article makes the argument that for transitional societies such as Vanuatu, where customary institutions exist side by side

and interact in a dynamic way with market forces, both formal and informal systems of social protection are important. In many instances, informal social protection is much more culturally relevant, much more extensive in reach and more sustainable than formal systems. Even urban workers in the formal economy often rely on informal social safety nets to mitigate social risks. Thus, mainstreaming informal social protection systems could transform Vanuatu's social protection policy framework.

### **The social protection discourse**

The term 'social protection' is often used interchangeably with 'social safety net' and 'social security', but the term social protection is now more common in international use. The term 'social safety net' tends to be less precise and is often used to refer to a set of programs and policies discussed in this strategy, while some use it to refer only to welfare and targeted programs for the poor. The term social security, on the other hand, refers to comprehensive mechanisms and coverage in industrialised countries and is less applicable to new areas such as community and micro and area-based schemes (ADB 2008). Social security often refers to formal systems of support for workers and citizens. Social protection is often linked to programs for the most vulnerable as a way of mitigating social risk.

While there is broad agreement on the role of social protection as a means of addressing the situation of vulnerable members of society, there is a divergence of views as to the theoretical discourse and applied forms and approach it should take. It has been argued that social protection is still weak in theory and there is lack of agreement on conceptual frameworks and terminology (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler 2007). The World Bank defines social protection in the context of managing social risk and includes both



public and community-based intervention measures 'to assist individuals, households and communities [to] better manage risk, and provide support to the critically poor' (Holzmann and Jørgensen 2000:3). The ADB has developed a conceptual framework that defines social protection in relation to 'policies and programs designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability by promoting efficient labor markets, diminishing people's exposure to risks, and enhancing their capacity to protect themselves against hazards and interruption/loss of income' (Baulch, Weber and Wood 2008:7). The areas covered in the ADB's framework are comprehensive and include labour market policies and programs, social insurance programs, social assistance, micro and area-based schemes, and child protection.

The use of the term 'social risk' has a corporate flavour (as in 'financial risk') and assumes that the poor are entities to invest in through social protection to realise their full productive potential. This epistemological assumption might be at odds with the self-perceptions and subjectivities of people in poverty or deemed to be 'at risk' whose main interests could be just survival and happiness. Nevertheless, it does convey a message about the link between debilitating social conditions and the possible consequences and the need to take action. In a way, the World Bank and ADB definitions attempt to conceptualise social protection as an integral component of, and supporting mechanism to, the market. This is at odds with the perception that social protection is 'anti-market' in that through state intervention it undermines the very basis of the free-market philosophy (Larson 1977). In opposition, Estevez-Abe (1999:1) argues that social protection and the market are intrinsically tied to the extent that social protection can 'rescue the market from itself' by helping to protect people from market failure. This is partly true in terms of the role

of social protection in cushioning the impact of market failure as well as subsidising and sustaining the social role of the market.

Terms such as 'managing social risks', used by the World Bank, and 'policies and programs', used by the ADB, assume that social protection is formally institutionalised and market related and do not necessarily capture the social dynamics in developing societies where socio-cultural relations at the everyday level of family, group and individual engagement do matter in terms of responses to internally or externally generated risks. Beyond the sphere of formally constituted social protection is an array of social relations and processes that respond to social calamities and involve the community at different levels and in different ways. These are often referred to as informal social protection systems.

The term 'informal' is quite problematic in its general use because some of the community-based systems are highly structured and culturally institutionalised. In the Pacific, for instance, the system of reciprocity of goods and services is structured very formally—not in terms of state policies or the market but relative to local cultural norms. These are referred to, however, as informal because they exist outside market relations. At the same time, there are activities such as adjusting expenditure, saving, changes in lifestyle and micro-finance that can be carried out voluntarily by families, individuals and civil society organisations that can be labelled as informal.

There are also broader community-based relationships involving cooperation, community alliances, collective innovation and potential that have been referred to as social capital (Putnam 1995) and which can be readily mobilised in times of crisis as a means of social protection (Knowles, Pernia and Racelis 1999). Strengthening of social capital is often either voluntary or driven



by culturally embedded imperatives such as kinship, socio-cultural status and socio-cultural obligations.

The differences between formal and informal systems of social protection have to do with questions of ownership and control of the process as well as the type of delivery mechanisms and associated institutional and social relations. Formal systems of social protection are often linked to policies (relating to insurance, compensation, poverty alleviation funds, and so on) emanating from the state, aid agencies or even civil society organisations, and often deal with protecting people in the formal sector. Informal social protection systems are usually community and family based and can be based on cultural systems of exchange, social networking and social safety nets. Increasingly, however, there is demand for greater engagement between the two since both have their limitations in terms of reach, cost and appropriateness in particular situations. At times, the lines between the two can be blurred. For instance, government micro-finance schemes in the Pacific are often run by families, women's groups or other community organisations, using community-based social capital and resources.

There is now greater recognition of the importance of informal and community-based social protection, particularly in terms of how it provides for people's control over their own social institutions, resources, structures of governance and delivery processes, given the structural limitations imposed by unequal power relations. Of importance here is how informal social protection mechanisms can be used to mitigate the debilitating effects of the market, to protect people from conditions that are beyond their control. For countries such as Vanuatu, where about 80 per cent of the population exists within the informal economy, systems of informal social protec-

tion are very much part of their daily lives and they are readily available to respond to market-generated calamities such as sharp increases in food or fuel prices. In developing Pacific states, informal social protection systems are cheaper, more readily available, more embedded within the community and can be more sustainable compared with formal systems, which can be limited in scope and reach.

### **Global economic crisis and urgency for social protection**

The recent upsurge in interest in social protection in the Pacific was sparked in the mid 2000s by the global economic crises, which hit the Pacific in a series of tsunami-type waves: increases in fuel prices, increases in food prices and the US financial crisis, which engulfed the whole world and impacted badly on developing economies. The responses of international development agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2008), the World Bank (2008a), the IMF (2008) and the ADB (2008) and governments showed desperation as the crises threatened to undo the important progress achieved in the areas of social and economic development. A joint publication by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the ADB and the UNDP argued that, in the absence of appropriate social protection programs, there was concern that the crises would worsen poverty in unprecedented ways and retard progress on the Millennium Development Goals in the Asia Pacific region (ESCAP, ADB and UNDP 2010). The report noted that in 2009 the crisis thrust an additional 17 million people in the Asia-Pacific region into extreme poverty and this number increased by another four million in 2010. One of the most immediate strategies was to identify and strengthen



existing social protection mechanisms that would shield the most vulnerable countries and the most vulnerable groups within these countries from the destructive effects of the crises. Among these were support for the expansion of social protection programs such as school feeding, food for work and conditional cash transfer programs focused on the most vulnerable groups, and increased and front-loaded budget support to the most vulnerable countries. The responses from international agencies were rapid, although their approaches to social protection were different in relation to the assessment methods, areas of intervention and prioritisation (Table 1).

Most Pacific island countries were caught off guard by the increase in food prices and its consequences. One of the biggest challenges was the absence of effective social protection systems. Some countries were worse off than others in terms of the impact of the crisis while some were more resilient and more proactive than others in terms of responses. In Fiji, the government's response was to subsidise the price of some

common food commodities, lower the tax on food grain, offer free bus fares to needy children and issue food vouchers. The Solomon Islands government subsidised some common food items and lowered the tax on food grain. In contrast, the Vanuatu government did not make any official response.

Unlike in industrialised states, in the Pacific, formal social protection systems are not well developed and are often neglected by governments as they are seen to be associated with charity and thus an unproductive sector to be left to civil society organisations, churches, charitable organisations and aid donors. The lack of state responsibility is compounded by the lack of resources for redistributive purposes, the absence of innovative development planning and the tendency to see social protection as the citizen's responsibility (ILO 2006).

**Table 1 Assessment of short and medium-term financing needs by various organisations (US\$ billion)**

	Safety nets and budget support	Rapid agricultural support (short term)	Agricultural and rural investment climate (medium term)	Energy access, diversification and efficiency (medium term)	Total
World Bank	1.0	2.5	3.5	3.5	10.5
World Food Program	6.0				6.0
Consultative Group in International Agricultural Research			1.0		1.0
IMF	0.5				0.5
Total	7.5	2.5	4.5	3.5	18.0

**Source:** World Bank, 2008a. *Double Jeopardy: responding to high food and fuel prices*, The World Bank, Washington, DC:13.



## Quantitative measurement of formal social protection

While there have been attempts to analyse informal social protection systems in the Pacific (ILO 2006), there has not been any attempt to provide a quantitative assessment. One of the difficulties is the fact that informal social protection systems are scattered within communities and are in many ways embedded in family, kinship and socio-cultural systems and thus might not be easy to quantify. In comparison, formal systems of social protection are easy to quantify because of readily available official data. This section deals with a comparative analysis of quantitative measurement of social protection systems in the Pacific.

Recently, attempts have been made to analyse and 'measure' the extent and effectiveness of social protection systems using the Social Protection Index (SPI). The SPI is calculated using the same method as that used for the Human Development Index (HDI), with four variables combined into a composite index: social protection expenditure (SPEXP), social protection coverage (SPCOV), social protection distribution (SPDIST) and social protection impact (SPIMP) (Baulch, Weber and Wood 2008). The index explicitly takes into account the social protection activities and programs of public, quasi-public and private sector organisations, including civil society and charitable organisations (Baulch, Weber and Wood 2006, 2008).

The Pacific island country with the highest SPI is Cook Islands, with a value of 0.55, and the lowest is Papua New Guinea, with a value of 0.01. The SPIs for other Pacific island countries are: Marshall Islands (0.34), Tuvalu (0.26), Fiji (0.15), Tonga (0.08) and Vanuatu (0.08). These countries are all members of the ADB. The Pacific rankings are relatively low compared with, say, Japan,

which is the highest ranked country in the Asia Pacific region and one of the highest in the world, with a value of 0.96, while Korea is ranked second in the Asia Pacific region, with a value of 0.76 (Baulch, Weber and Wood 2006, 2008) (Table 2). The reason for showing the Japanese and Korean rankings is that since they are the highest in the Asia Pacific region, they provide a comparative understanding of where Pacific island states are in the broader scheme of things.

The SPI rankings of selected countries in the Asia Pacific, with the assessed Pacific countries shaded, are shown in Table 3. Only the Cook Islands is in the 'above average category', while Nauru, Marshall Islands and Tuvalu are in the 'average' category and Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea are in the 'below average' category.

One of the advantages of the SPI is that it allows policymakers to see how their social protection programs are positioned in relation to the bigger socioeconomic picture within the country as well as comparatively with other countries in the region. It should also be a good measure for determining the response potential of countries to sudden calamities.

It is important to note that SPI ranking does not necessarily correlate with the United Nation's HDI, although the methods of calculation are similar. For instance, Tonga, which has a very low SPI of 0.08, has a very high HDI of 0.82. The relationship between SPI and HDI is determined by diverse factors. Vanuatu, Fiji and Tonga have much higher HDIs than SPIs, while Nauru has a very high SPI because it relies largely on social protection given its low HDI and impoverished socioeconomic condition. Furthermore, countries score differently in the different social protection variables. For instance, in terms of direct social assistance, Fiji has 48 per cent coverage, which is the highest in the countries surveyed in the Asia Pacific region, yet it scores very low on



micro-credit scheme coverage at 0.4 per cent (Baulch, Weber and Wood 2006).

On average, Asian and Pacific countries spend 4.8 per cent of their GDP on social protection and achieve an overall social protection coverage level of 35 per cent of the

seven key target populations. These figures compare with 4.5 per cent and 22 per cent, respectively, for the Pacific island countries. The average proportion of the Asian Pacific poor who receive some social protection benefits is 57 per cent and social protection

**Table 2 Social Protection Index (SPI) for selected Pacific island countries**

Country	SPI
Cook Islands	0.55
Nauru	0.42
Marshall Islands	0.34
Tuvalu	0.26
Fiji	0.15
Tonga	0.08
Vanuatu	0.08
Papua New Guinea	0.01
Japan	0.96
Korea	0.76

**Source:** Baulch, B., Weber, A. and Wood, J., 2008. *Social Protection Index for Committed Poverty Reduction. Volume 2*, Asian Development Bank, Manila.

**Table 3 Selected Asian Pacific countries showing the relative SPI rankings\***

Above average	Average	Below average
1. Japan	12. Nauru	22. Philippines
2. Korea	13. Vietnam	23. Laos
3. Kyrgyzstan	14. Malaysia	24. Nepal
4. Mongolia	15. Marshall Islands	25. Cambodia
5. Uzbekistan	16. Armenia	26. Bhutan
6. Cook Islands	17. Bangladesh	27. Fiji
7. Kazakhstan	18. Indonesia	28. Tonga
8. Azerbaijan	19. Tajikistan	29. Vanuatu
9. Sri Lanka	20. Tuvalu	30. Pakistan
10. India	21. Maldives	31. Papua New Guinea
11. China		

\* Countries are sorted in descending order of their SPI value.

**Source:** Halcrow China Limited 2007. *Scaling Up of the Social Protection Index for Committed Poverty Reduction. Volume 2. Summary of country reports*, Asian Development Bank, Manila:66.



programs impact on 23 per cent of those below the poverty line. The Pacific averages are much lower, at 35 per cent and 11 per cent, respectively. These comparisons clearly show that formal social protection programs in the Pacific are not well developed.

### Weaknesses of the SPI framework

One of the major shortcomings of the SPI framework is that it does not take into consideration the contribution of informal or traditional social protection systems. Up to 80 per cent of the population of Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, for instance, and a significant proportion of people in other Pacific island countries still depend on the subsistence or semi-subsistence sector and rely on indigenous knowledge systems and traditional social mechanisms such as reciprocity, custom farming and kinship social support as social protection mechanisms (ILO 2006). An International Labour Organisation (ILO 2006) study on traditional mechanisms of social protection in Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Samoa showed that indigenous social protection mechanisms are widely used where modern forms of social protection do not exist; in some cases they are used in combination or as alternatives to formal systems.

### Social protection in Vanuatu

The SPI values for Vanuatu for the various formal social protection variables are relatively low compared with other Pacific island countries (compare Tables 2, 3 and 4). This assessment refers only to social protection mechanisms provided by the state, civil society, churches and the private sector and does not include the vast network of traditional social protection systems at work on a daily basis, as we will see later.

A stocktake of public social security protection programs in Vanuatu carried out by the ILO (2006) shows that of the 50 social security programs on its list, only 17 were being implemented in Vanuatu (Table 5). Of the 15 possible social protection programs relevant to the labour market, only six exist. In the area of social insurance, of the nine possible programs, only four exist; for social assistance, of the 12 possible programs, only four exist. In the area of micro-finance, only one out of five programs exists; and for child protection, of the possible nine areas, only two are covered.

Of the 17 possible social protection systems that are relevant to mitigating increases in the price of food, however, only two (micro-loans and programs for the disabled) exist in Vanuatu. Important ones that do not exist include social funds; cash transfers for

Table 4 SPI values for Vanuatu

SPI variable	Value
SPEXP	0.01
SPCOV	0.13
SPDIST	0.10
SPIMP	0.02
SPI	0.08
Rank	29

**Source:** Baulch, B., Weber, A. and Wood, J., 2008. *Social Protection Index for Committed Poverty Reduction. Volume 2*, Asian Development Bank, Manila.



Table 5 Formal social protection programs in Vanuatu

Sector and programs	Existing programs
Vocational training	X
Income-generation programs	
Labour standards	X
Apprenticeship training	
Gender-equity programs	
Collective bargaining	X
Structural-adjustment assistance	
Micro-enterprise development	X
Anti-exploitative programs	
Affirmative-action programs	
Occupational health and safety	X
Social funds	
Job-seeker programs	
Labour exchanges	
AIDS in the workplace programs	X
Old-age pensions	
Disability benefits	X
Survivor benefits	X
Work injury insurance	X
Private pensions	
Maternity benefits	X
Unemployment insurance	
Sickness insurance	
Social health insurance	
Cash transfers for aged, widows and disabled	
Food-for-work transfers	
Food-security programs	
In-kind education incentives	
School feeding programs	
Conflict compensation	
Utility subsidies	
Programs for disabled	X
Homeless person assistance	
Medical rehabilitation	X
Assistance to disaster victims	X
Subsidised medical treatment	X
Micro-loans	X
Micro-insurance	
Agricultural insurance	
Welfare funds	
Assistance for disadvantaged minorities	
Child maintenance	
Family allowance	
Human rights	X
Scholarships for disadvantaged	
Vaccination programs	X
Nutrition programs	
Rehabilitation programs	
Assistance for homeless youth	
Anti-child labour/trafficking	

**Source:** International Labour Organisation (ILO), 2006. *Social Security for all Men and Women: a sourcebook for extending social security coverage in Vanuatu*, International Labour Organisation, Suva:51–2.



the aged, widowed and disabled; food-for-work transfers; food-security programs; school feeding programs; utility subsidies; homeless person assistance; welfare funds; assistance for disadvantaged minorities; child maintenance; family allowance; scholarships for the disadvantaged; nutrition programs; rehabilitation programs; assistance for homeless youth; and anti-child labour/trafficking programs.

The problem with this stocktake exercise is that it is limited to the less than 10 per cent of the population in urban areas and does not reflect the situation nation-wide. Even for the 17 social protection programs identified, their significance is grossly exaggerated primarily because the formal sector in Vanuatu is quite small. This is an area where informal social protection fills the gaps. Most urban workers fall back on customary social safety nets to provide a cushion against social risk. As seen in the next section, the informal and formal social protection systems in Vanuatu are closely integrated and the lines can be quite blurred.

### **The formal and informal intersection: some examples of social protection programs**

One of the biggest providers of formal social protection is the Vanuatu National Provident Fund (VNPF), which is administered by a tripartite board representing workers unions, employers and the government (which is represented by the CEO for the Ministry of Finance, who is also the chair). The fund has a membership of about 40,000. In January 2004, the contribution rate was reduced from 12 per cent to 8 per cent of gross salary. The reduction was meant to ease the financial pressure on employers. Despite this, some employers continue to contribute 12 per cent of salary for their employees (ILO 2006:39).

The VNPF has provision for four types of benefits for members and payment is on the basis of a lump sum balance at the time of retirement at age 55; permanent incapacitation at work; death of a member; and migration. Thus, the provident fund has a long-term provision but, except for help for the incapacitated, there is no provision for financial emergencies. This is where the VNPF needs to focus to ensure that members' welfare is taken care of at different stages of their working life. For instance, there is now provision for emergency withdrawals due to sudden loss of employment but an upper limit needs to be set. This has been the practice in Fiji, where vulnerable sections of the community can access money quickly and easily in times of emergency. Because of this restricted access, urban workers often rely on informal arrangements, including reliance on the subsistence sector for food and other forms of sustenance. Most working families in Port Vila have family gardens or receive vegetables, fruit and root crops from relatives in villages and outer islands.

Social protection in the area of health has been an important focus in recent years. In Vanuatu, there are five central and district hospitals with a total bed capacity of 360; 22 health centres, 77 dispensaries and 187 aid posts. Among the major health problems are poor nutrition, lack of trained personnel and lack of modern facilities. A Ministry of Health survey of 1,620 adults in 1998 showed that 33 per cent were overweight and 16 per cent were obese; 10 per cent had hypertension; and 3 per cent had diabetes (Vanuatu Ministry of Health 2008).

It is estimated that 16 per cent of the children in Vanuatu are moderately or severely underweight, 20 per cent are moderately or severely stunted and 7 per cent are severely or moderately wasted. The poor health of mothers and children was further exacerbated by the food crisis,



especially those who relied on imported food, as they were forced to look for cheaper and less nutritious food. A paper by a Vanuatu Ministry of Health team presented at the UNICEF-sponsored conference on the impact of the economic crisis on children in East Asia and the Pacific in January 2009 raised concerns that 'the current economic crisis would certainly impact on the health of mothers and children, especially those dependent on imported foods' (Vanuatu Ministry of Health 2009:2).

The report also highlighted the fact that 'Vanuatu has enough food grown out of subsistence agriculture, gardening, fishing, and rearing poultry and livestock to feed her people'; however, the problem of malnutrition persists because 'the traditional Vanuatu diet consists mainly of starchy staples and many families do not get protein and vitamin[s] regularly' (Vanuatu Ministry of Health 2009:2). Thus, the problem identified was not so much a lack of food as a lack of awareness regarding the importance of a balanced diet with sufficient quantities of vitamins, proteins and other nutrients.

State intervention in health has, however, been constrained by resources and expertise. For a number of years, the government has been pushing for a return to indigenous fruit, vegetables and root crops but the global increase in food prices also impacted on the price of local produce in the Port Vila market. For instance, the prices of yams and bananas more than doubled in December 2008 and people resorted to cheaper noodles.

The system of personal savings has been growing in Vanuatu in recent years. The Vanuatu Financial Services Commission (VFSC) regulates credit unions but at the moment there are no credit unions as such. There are savings clubs—the precursor to credit unions. The savings clubs are registered with the Credit Union League and are supported until they reach maturity

and become fully fledged credit unions. These savings clubs were set up by the Credit Union League, the government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide basic savings and lending services to rural areas and those on the margins of socioeconomic activities. The aim was to develop the savings capacity of households and provide cash, which can be used for emergency situations. By June 2004, after two years of operation, 12 savings clubs had been set up on the islands of Malekula, Santo, Maevo, Ambrym, Efate, Anatyam and Santo. In the past five years, a few more clubs have been set up.

The savings clubs have turned out to be a blessing for households that are members, as they have been able to acquire cash quickly to buy food and other household items. One of the strengths of the savings club is its easy integration into the traditional ethos of communal saving and distribution. According to the ILO

The Savings Club concept is based on the recognition that within rural communities a culture of savings already existed. People would save traditional wealth like mat[s] and pigs for special occasions and there was always continuous supply as a result of this. It is assumed that this culturally induced behaviour can be easily translated into saving cash. So far this project is expanding and has been highly appreciated by the communities concerned (ILO 2006:83).

This development shows that culturally adapted social protection systems have a better chance of success in Vanuatu than formal and culturally distant ones. For sustainability, the government savings project had to operate within the ambit of community-based social organisations and norms. The formal and informal intersect in



a dynamic way and reinforce each other in many instances.

Another area of growing social protection is micro-finance. A number of projects can be classified under the micro-finance rubric. These include the Cooperative Development Fund, ni-Vanuatu Micro Finance Scheme and Vanwood. The Cooperative Development Fund (CDF) was set up within the Department of Cooperatives to promote the expansion of the cooperative movement in rural areas. Altogether there are 224 cooperatives registered in the six provinces and about 200 are currently active. Their aim is to market agricultural products in new markets but at the moment the cooperative activities are limited largely to village stores. The CDF is funded by government grants for setting up cooperatives and infrastructural development and providing loans to cooperatives. The interest rate for the government loans is about 12 per cent over the five years of the loan.

The cooperatives operate at the village level and are involved in multipurpose activities including marketing agricultural products such as cassava, kava and vegetables. They also operate in village markets and stores and are involved in trading between islands. Some of the savings from these can be loaned to members. The cooperatives are owned and controlled by the members and usually a cooperative committee is in charge of operational matters. There is a strong cultural flavour in the way cooperatives are run because the chiefs and members of the community are engaged in a collective way.

The ni-Vanuatu Micro Finance Scheme is an NGO established under the *Charitable Association Act 2000*, which began operation in March 2001 through a grant of VT110 million from the People's Republic of China. The two types of loan it offers are a micro-loan of VT30,000–100,000 for six to 12 months and small loans of VT100,000 up

to VT2 million for a term of 12–36 months. The loan conditions include a 10 per cent interest rate per annum on small loans and cash deposits for security. About 190 projects have been funded since 2001 with an average loan value of VT400,000; almost 50 per cent of this was borrowed on the main Éfate Island.

Repayments have, however, not been as strong as expected. For instance, in December 2002, only 25 per cent of the total due was paid. The biggest defaulters were large borrowers with VT1–2 million loans. The assessment and monetary methods of borrowers have been inadequate but attempts are being made by the National Bank of Vanuatu to improve the situation by using 'community collateral'. This means that the bank will work with chiefs and the community to ensure that borrowers from the communities pay back their loans.

Based on the Grameen Bank concept, Vanwood was set up in 1996 through a joint venture between the UNDP and the government as part of a gender mainstreaming process to assist disadvantaged women. It has turned out to be one of the most successful micro-finance programs in Vanuatu. Vanwood has 4,000 members—mostly women (90 per cent)—on the islands of Éfate and Santo. It aims to engage women at the grassroots level in micro-finance to enable them to meet the daily needs of their families in a sustainable way.

Borrowers are divided into groups of five individuals. Each Vanwood centre has seven officials involved in orientation and training programs. The centre's project officer screens the applications for loans and the whole group approves the loans for individuals. The loan ceiling is normally VT150,000 and the credit line savings is VT200 a week. The credit line depends on the savings. The micro-finance projects that members engage in are entirely their own decision. Some are involved in selling



popular food items such as bananas and peanuts and some sell cigarettes and kava in their *nakamal* (kava bars).

The principles that Vanwood espouses include hard work, building up savings for emergencies and even daily life, and consolidation of trust within the community. Each member is expected to pay VT200 a week as part of their contribution and saving. There are two types of savings. The first is flexi savings, which ensures that members save as much as they can. The second is pledge savings, which requires members to save VT200 every week, as this determines their credit line. Records show that 100 per cent of the members pay every week (Personal communication with the Vanwood director). Vanwood's services include pledge saving, care saving, special saving, regular business loans, educational loans and asset loans for such things as home improvements. In a recent survey carried out by Vanwood, 90 per cent of the children whose parents are members of Vanwood attend school, compared with the national average of about 60 per cent.

Vanwood's sustainability is due to two major reasons. First is the fact that it provides an empowering space for women to express their full potential as responsible entrepreneurs. In terms of the traditional gender division of labour, Vanuatu women usually engage in most of the socioeconomic activities such as farming, fishing and household chores, and the Vanwood project represents an extension of this role. Second, the project is embedded within the traditional socio-cultural system and uses community trust and solidarity as forms of social collateral.

There have been challenges to Vanwood's operation. One of the impacts of the sharp increase in the price of food was the collapse of the bottom ranks of the Vanwood members who could not keep up with the weekly VT200 savings. Between 2006 and 2008, the price of food increased by almost 15 per cent

(Vanuatu National Statistics Office 2009). The situation was exacerbated by the opening of the new French Bank, BRED, which enticed low-income borrowers with its low interest and easy credit advertisements. This increased many members' debt levels because they borrowed from BRED to pay off their Vanwood loans. Another disruptive factor was the diversion of savings towards cheap mobile phones sold by the newly opened Digicel Company. The mobile phone has opened up opportunities for cheaper and more convenient communication with relatives and friends and between rural and urban areas to the extent that many see it as a fundamental necessity just like food and shelter, which provides more accessible communication among *wantoks*.

### Customary and informal social protection systems

While formal social protection systems are seen as intervention programs from outside, informal and customary systems are embedded in the local culture and social networks. To understand the informal Vanuatu social protection system, one has to look at the wider structure of socio-cultural systems because the social safety nets have been part of the people's traditional system of redistribution, care and community consolidation.

The terminology that encapsulates the socio-cultural networks that bind people together, the codification of indigenous knowledge, socioeconomic exchange, ceremonies, land rights and other cultural practices is *wantok*. As an ideological and philosophical concept, *wantok* can be quite broad and nebulous but at the same time it can refer to a specific practice or behaviour considered customary. There are a number of specific aspects of the *wantok* system that are pertinent to an understanding of traditional social protection in Vanuatu.



The *wantok* framework is based on collective responsibility; the community has an obligation to look after the interests of other members of the community. This obligation can take the form of reciprocity or exchange of goods on a daily basis. People who do not have food can always ask their relatives and, later, when their relatives need food, it will be their turn to ask. Sociologists refer to this practice as 'generalised reciprocity'. Ideally, the *wantok* system ensures that no-one goes hungry in the village. Within the village subsistence economy, food is readily shared as part of the socioeconomic redistribution system and as a means of addressing social solidarity and conflict. The reality, however, is not as romantic, as the pressures of daily survival and limited resources in urban areas force people to become more concerned with their immediate families, limiting the extent of their communal responsibility. In urban areas, *wantok* links are often invoked when the need arises and ignored when they become a liability.

The age-old practice of barter exchange is still very common in Vanuatu and involves the exchange of goods between different groups. Exchange is often on the basis of need, where a group that lacks a particular commodity tries to acquire it through exchange. This system has sustained many communities over a long period and acted as a social safety net during the recent increases in food prices. People essentially traded food for various valued items they had in abundance.

The Government of Vanuatu through the Vanuatu Cultural Center (VCC) has embarked on a project to put in place a framework for the legalisation of traditional money for everyday use. The project is funded by UNESCO and Japanese Funds-In-Trust for the Preservation and Promotion of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The main thrust of the program was to identify the extent of use of traditional money such as

shells and pigs' tusks and how this could be mainstreamed. This idea was given a boost by the decision to designate 2007 the Year of the Traditional Economy, 'with the intent to sensitise and raise awareness of people about the central and crucial role the traditional economy plays in providing livelihoods, security and sustainable development outcomes to the population of Vanuatu' (VCC 2008).

One assumption was that concepts such as loans, credit, investment, banking, interest and compound interest already existed in some traditional forms and these could be readily integrated with the introduced concepts in a mutually engaging way. In addition, concepts of sound management and good governance also exist in the traditional context and the challenge was how to harness these and adapt to the new situation.

The use of customary currency in Vanuatu in the mainstream economy is a paradigm-shifting practice. Even traditional 'banks' have been set up as deposit and distribution points. This places the exchange process outside the global economy. In the new economic system, traditional currency such as pigs' tusks and mats can be used to buy household goods and food. Many ni-Vanuatu are using this system, with the encouragement of the government, to respond to the increase in food prices.

Land is the most important socio-cultural asset that the ni-Vanuatu fall back on as a social safety measure. As in many other Pacific societies, in Vanuatu, land is communally owned and everyone within a kinship network has rights to its use (Van Trease 1987). Land is inseparably linked to kinship groups and identity and people relate to it in complex cosmological ways. It symbolises wealth and cultural attachment and one's socio-cultural roots are connected spiritually with the land. Land has three integrated components. First, it is perceived



as a physical and socioeconomic entity to sustain life. Second, it is the embodiment of socio-cultural and kinship links between groups. A social group's identity is rooted in the land. Third is the spiritual and cosmological significance, which underpins the community's relationship with the ancestral world in continuity between the past, present and future. One of the biggest problems facing the land issue, however, is the increasing alienation and commercialisation of land for real estate by foreigners. This has diminished the amount of land available for use by locals as well as created conflict over land.

A survey carried out in Port Vila in 2009 showed that 90.3 per cent of the surveyed households had access to land and relied on farming to provide for their family needs (ADB 2009). The figures show the heavy reliance of urban Vanuatu households on farming. Land no doubt provides a very important fallback position when all else fails. As a result of the rise in the price of food, the Vanuatu government is encouraging people to go back to the land and farm. The increase in the leasing of land and the increase in population have, however, put

considerable pressure on the available land, which has contributed to tension within urban communities.

### Identifying the vulnerable groups

While there are degrees of vulnerability, we are most interested in those who are most vulnerable and disadvantaged by virtue of lack of capacity and opportunities in the areas of education, employment and physical capacity and who are most at risk of sinking even further into poverty. It is estimated that 40 per cent of all ni-Vanuatu and 51 per cent of all rural dwellers have incomes below the international poverty line of US\$1 a day (ADB 2003a:1).

A more detailed look at the results of the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) shows major disparities, especially between expatriates and local ni-Vanuatu. Based on the 2000 Census, 86.9 per cent of ni-Vanuatu received income between zero and VT79,999 a month, while 83.5 per cent of expatriates received VT99,999 or more (Table 6). The largest proportion of expatriates (28.5 per cent) received salaries of more than VT300,000 a month. Most expatriates were either professionals or businessmen.

Table 6 Monthly salary distribution, by nationality

Monthly salary range (vatu)	ni-Vanuatu nationals (%)	Expatriates (%)	Percentage of all employees
0–19,999	19.2	0.6	18.4
20,000–39,999	36.8	4.0	35.4
40,000–59,999	21.7	7.1	21.1
60,000–79,999	9.2	4.7	9.0
80,000–99,999	4.0	6.9	4.1
100,000–199,999	7.2	30.1	8.2
200,000–299,999	0.8	18.0	1.5
300,000 +	1.1	28.5	2.3
All	100	100	100

Source: Vanuatu National Statistics Office, 2000. *Labour Market Survey*, Vanuatu National Statistics Office, Port Vila:21).



**Table 7 Average monthly income by sex and ethnicity of head of household and location (vatu)**

		Rural						Urban			Grand total	
		Torba	Sanma	Penam	Mala	Shefa	Tafea	Total	Lug	Vila		Total
ni-Vanuatu and part ni-Vanuatu	M	36,332	53,740	73,884	51,528	56,085	44,601	54,804	66,381	89,523	83,624	60,839
	F	31,190	34,666	31,601	25,456	44,441	33,555	33,721	45,853	75,016	69,415	43,959
	Total	35,990	53,171	70,873	49,160	54,786	43,707	53,188	64,620	87,797	82,050	59,470
Others	M	-	9,217	-	-	800,000	-	454,204	36,220	310,739	257,716	280,080
	F	-	-	-	-	63,551	-	63,511	-	330,633	330,633	262,361
	Total	-	9,217	-	-	439,616	-	317,340	36,220	314,718	269,955	276,649
Grand total		35,990	53,097	70,837	49,160	56,494	43,707	53,462	64,208	93,400	86,218	60,711

- zero

Source: Government of Vanuatu, 2006. *House, Income and Expenditure Survey*, Government of Vanuatu, Port Vila.

**Table 8 Disparity in the income average between males and females, across provinces (vatu)**

Province	Difference in average income
Torba	5,142
Sanma	19,079
Penam	42,283
Malam	26,072
Shefa	11,644
Tafea	11,046
Total	21,083

Source: Derived from Government of Vanuatu, 2006. *House, Income and Expenditure Survey*, Government of Vanuatu, Port Vila.



While expatriates rely entirely on private insurance and other formal social protection measures, locals rely by and large on informal social protection systems.

The massive disparity is also shown in the 2006 HIES (Table 7). For instance, the average monthly income for male expatriates in Shefa was VT800,000, compared with VT54,786 for ni-Vanuatu. In Port Vila, the capital, the average monthly income of expatriates was VT314,718 and for locals VT87,797.

In terms of gender disparity between the islands, there were considerable differences (Table 8, calculated from Table 7). Theoretically, one would assume that in Penam, where the difference (VT42,283) is highest, women would be significantly more vulnerable than in Torba, where the difference (VT5,142) is lowest. The differences between male and female monthly income averages in the urban areas are much lower at VT14,209.

Another area of disparity is between urban and rural areas. Among ni-Vanuatu, the total average monthly income for rural areas is VT53,188 and the total average for urban areas is VT82,050.

About 76 per cent of the population of Vanuatu lives in villages and settlements, which can be classified as rural (Government of Vanuatu 2009). Although there is an urbanisation rate of 4.1 per cent, there is also a high degree of movement in and out of the urban areas, with people coming to Port Vila to sell their produce or for shopping and returning to their villages. Some live in nearby villages and commute to work every day. The dynamics between the urban and rural populations have direct and indirect impacts on social protection systems. People in rural areas rely largely on informal social protection systems, while those in urban areas have easier access to formal systems.

The distinction between the rural and urban spheres is not only geographical but

**Table 9 Perceptions of problems between rural and urban populations**

Urban	Rural
100 per cent of households with high interest rate problems	94 per cent of households with animal, dam and ageing garden problems
92 per cent of households with electricity problems	92 per cent of households with poor climate or natural disaster problems
80 per cent of households with access-to-education problems	86 per cent of households with mosquito problems
75 per cent of households with housing problems	82 per cent of households with theft problems
75 per cent of households with kava problems	80 per cent of households with food shortage problems
69 per cent of households with extended family commitment problems	71 per cent of households with transport problems
67 per cent of households with personal disputes with household members	62 per cent of households with water-supply problems
	57 per cent of households with health problems

**Source:** Government of Vanuatu, 1998. *The Vanuatu Poverty Survey*, Government of Vanuatu, Port Vila:68.



socioeconomic and socio-psychological as well. This distinction is important when considering the relevance and appropriateness of social protection systems. For instance, in the Vanuatu Poverty Survey of 1998 (Government of Vanuatu 1998) some interesting differences in perceptions between rural and urban populations were identified. People's responses to the question of what they perceived their problems to be are shown in Table 9.

The responses were very different between urban and rural dwellers and were directly linked to people's everyday experiences and needs. Although the survey was carried out in 1998, it can be safely assumed that many of these problems are pertinent today, and it provides useful background to an understanding of the socioeconomic problems people are faced with and of social protection needs.

In the same survey, another question asked people what they thought the government and NGOs should do to improve the socioeconomic problems identified. About 40 per cent indicated that they needed economic improvements, and 31 per cent of this group wanted job opportunities. A further 19 per cent of respondents indicated that they needed assistance with basic needs—mainly improving the condition of housing.

An understanding of the household as the basic socioeconomic and cultural institutional unit is important in our study of social protection. During the 1999 Census, 35,605 (98 per cent) of households had a ni-Vanuatu as head of the household and the average number of people in a household was 5.1. Of the total number of household heads, 87 per cent were male and 13 per cent were female. This distribution has been seen as problematic and, according to the ILO

Of particular concern to social protection is the relatively high number of female headed households as women

are one of the groups most vulnerable to poverty. Unless there are family members with employment and in the absence of formal social security programs then these families are forced to rely on the support of extended families to supplement their basic needs (ILO 2006:27).

Urban-based households are under greater financial pressure than their rural counterparts as a result of their reliance on the cash economy. Urban female heads of households are burdened with the multiple responsibilities of looking for food and maintaining sustainable diets, looking after family health and sending the children to school—among other things. Reliance on garden plots and extended family members is increasingly difficult in urban areas as a result of the growth in urban populations and urban development. These difficulties often lead to children dropping out of school, crime, teenage pregnancies and other social problems. For rural households, reliance on subsistence agriculture is still the mainstay of socioeconomic life.

A survey in 2009 showed that 29.1 per cent of households were made up of one nuclear family and 70.9 per cent comprised two or more nuclear families. In Port Vila, groups of families lived together in clusters to pool resources for survival. Their relatives from villages would visit them and provide root crops, vegetables and fruits; in turn, the urban relatives would provide shelter and money to buy 'Western' goods for the village (ADB 2009).

Age distribution is also important for social protection. Forty-three per cent of the Vanuatu population is under the age of 14 years, 54 per cent is between the ages of 15 and 65, and those over 65 years of age make up 3 per cent (Government of Vanuatu 2009). The dependency population of 43 per cent is relatively high compared with countries such



as Australia, which has a dependency rate of about 20 per cent. If one adds the 3 per cent of those above 65 years (which is low compared with industrialised countries), Vanuatu's dependency ratio increases to 46 per cent, which is still far higher than Australia's (33 per cent).

A comparison of monthly income with monthly expenditure provides a comprehensive picture of vulnerability. For ni-Vanuatu, the total average monthly expenditure is VT52,361 (Table 10). If we compare this with the total average household monthly income of VT55,462, we can calculate that an average household saves a mere VT827 a month. This calculation presents a rather grim picture if we focus primarily on the monetary relationship between income and expenditure. To respond to the situation, ni-Vanuatu have developed survival strategies

such as selective buying, use of traditional social protection systems and reliance on land and traditional foods.

The HIES information in Table 10 provides a broad idea of who are the most likely vulnerable groups. A comprehensive study by the ILO identifies a number of categories within the ni-Vanuatu population as being most susceptible to risk and most in need of social protection (Table 11).

### Conclusions: future options

As the title of this article suggests, a 'back-to-basics' approach provides the way forward for social protection for Vanuatu—in particular, the use of social capital and community-based systems to mitigate social risk. The fact that about 80 per cent of the Vanuatu population relies on the

Table 10 **Average monthly household expenditure, by expenditure subgroups, sex and ethnicity of head of household (vatu)**

Expenditure subgroup	Ni-Vanuatu and part ni-Vanuatu			Others			Grand total
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Food	12,020	11,065	11,940	59,145	110,853	69,157	12,267
Household items	3,075	2,725	3,045	48,625	5,893	40,351	3,258
Household operation	4,374	4,260	4,364	54,228	37,520	50,993	4,631
Clothing	797	1,082	821	3,077	80	2,497	831
Transport	2,593	1,982	2,542	80,181	59,786	76,323	2,963
Tobacco and alcohol	1,423	881	1,378	15,363	8,927	14,117	1,450
Miscellaneous	4,423	3,269	4,326	30,289	40,571	32,280	4,486
Own account production	17,269	13,206	16,928	1,450	2,633	1,679	16,841
Income in kind	1,858	1,881	1,860	10,895	767	8,926	1,901
Gifts received	1,026	791	1,006	926	53	757	1,005
Gifts given	1,400	966	1,364	625	224	547	1,359
Non-consumption expenditure	2,793	2,721	2,787	4,852	839	4,075	2,794
Total expenditure	53,052	44,829	52,361	309,644	268,146	301,609	53,785

Source: Government of Vanuatu, 2006. *House, Income and Expenditure Survey*, Government of Vanuatu, Port Vila.



Table 11 **Vulnerable groups in Vanuatu**

Broad group	Subgroups within broad group	Reasons for 'vulnerability'
Workers in the formal economy	Those with low wages; women workers; low-skill workers; workers with inadequate education	Almost total reliance on the market economy and vulnerability to increases in food prices. Very minimal formal protection provided by the provident fund and lack of protection from a range of life-cycle risks
Workers in the informal economy	Those without steady employment; those involved in selling food on roadsides and in the market; small entrepreneurs; shop workers; bus and taxi drivers; kava sellers ( <i>nakamal</i> )	These people represent most of the workers in Vanuatu but social security provisions are not available to them. They are highly vulnerable to changes in circumstances such as increases in food prices. They exist largely on the margin and can easily descend into poverty. Many have capacity to carry out subsistence farming to subsidise their income but even this is increasingly difficult due to the increasing scarcity of land in urban areas. The increase in food prices had a significant impact on this group
People living in outer islands	Rural women, children and babies are the most vulnerable	The high transportation costs, lack of adequate infrastructure, lack of proper health care and high price of food due to distance from urban areas
Youth	Unemployed; underemployed; and those at the margin of modern and traditional cultures	Each year about 1,000 15–16-year-old youths join the labour force and very few find productive work. Many become disillusioned and become absorbed into excessive kava drinking. Many resort to crime. The increase in food prices has the potential to exacerbate the problem
Large households	A number of nuclear families living in a household with only one or two people employed; households with no access to land	Often groups of nuclear families live together in urban households, sharing limited financial resources. Immense pressure is put on the household to feed everyone and, in the absence of land for semi-subsistence farming, the problem could be worsened. The increase in food prices has worsened the situation
Disabled	Physically immobile; blind; those unable to carry out normal activities; and those requiring direct physical assistance	Discussions with officials of the Vanuatu Society for Disabled People (VSDP) revealed that most of these people are unemployed and experience discrimination, despite VSDP's attempts to integrate them into society. Some are despised by their own families. Many are vulnerable to food price increases



People without access to land	Migrants from rural areas who need land for sustenance; people who have sold their land to developers and now have no land	Land is increasingly scarce and this undermines the capacity of people to survive. Increases in the price of food make the situation even worse
People without regular income	This includes the old; invalids; widowed; unemployed single mothers; unemployed heads of households	Lack of regular income presents risk of descending into poverty. Increases in food prices would have a major impact
Children and babies	Children and babies of poor families living in overcrowded households	Lack of good nutrition can be damaging to the health of children and babies. Increases in food prices can contribute to this problem
Victims of natural disasters	Victims of cyclones and floods	Disasters can destroy food gardens, which many ni-Vanuatu rely on

**Sources:** International Labour Organisation (ILO), 2006. *Social Security for All Men and Women: a sourcebook for extending social security coverage in Vanuatu*, International Labour Organisation, Suva; and various groups and individuals consulted in Vanuatu.

informal economy makes community-based and informal social protection even more appropriate, readily available and effective. Formal systems of social protection are limited in reach and are mostly geared towards retirement for workers in the formal sector and, even then, most workers rely on custom gardens to subsidise their incomes. As shown, more than 90 per cent of workers surveyed in Port Vila in 2008 had access to some land for farming.

Most of the vulnerable groups are ni-Vanuatu and the glaring disparity relative to expatriates could continue as expatriate investment increases through land speculation and tourism. Interestingly, however, one of the government's responses to globalisation and the socioeconomic transformation of Vanuatu's society is to seek alternatives by looking inwards and harnessing cultural

capital in the form of traditional banks, traditional money and other traditional forms of exchange. This approach could be construed as an avoidance technique to escape engagement with the market economy; but it can also be seen as an innovative search for alternative processes that are economically self-sustaining, culturally appropriate and socio-ideologically empowering.

Given the dynamic interaction between the subsistence and market economies, the choice for Vanuatu should not be between the formal and informal systems of social protection but how one can reinforce the other. Informal social protection should not be seen as anti-market and the formal systems of social protection should not be seen as anti-custom. For vulnerable groups, the most effective means of addressing social risks matters more than the debate



about the form it takes. The socio-political stability Vanuatu enjoys can be attributed partly to its informal social protection systems, since they have the capacity to absorb socioeconomic pressures that could easily be transformed into political tension.

An integrated social protection regime in Vanuatu would be important in a number of ways. It would ensure that people still have access to their basic needs and do not fall into absolute poverty. It should also reinforce people's sense of cultural identity as they adapt to new challenges—especially because traditional systems of social protection are very much part of people's socio-cultural experiences and existence. As Vanuatu's economy expands, the need for strengthening the social protection system also increases. The government's efforts to strengthen traditional social protection systems will help supplement the formal social protection projects.

The emphasis on formal social protection by international organisations such as the World Bank, the ADB, the ILO and bilateral donors should be balanced with informal systems of social protection. The Vanuatu state and civil society organisations are in a better position to harness and encourage informal social protection systems. This could be done through more research and auditing of existing customary protection and support systems, mainstreaming these into the government's development and welfare policy and providing a policy framework to integrate formal and informal systems of social protection in a systematic and sustainable way. This would mean a participatory multi-stakeholder approach involving international aid agencies, the national government, civil society organisations and community groups. The poor and vulnerable need to be part of the participatory process. They should not be seen as cognitively dormant, but as conscious agents of social transformation who create

and reproduce their social realities within their local social sphere.

This approach will avoid criticisms of external hegemony and help create space for the development of local social capital that can be utilised innovatively for public policy purposes. Or, as rugby coaches often tell their players when complex techniques do not work: 'back to basics'.

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