



SOCIAL PROTECTION IN UGANDA: A CALL FOR ACTION

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PREFACE

This year, 2008, Uganda is expected to be half way on the road to realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). While considerable achievements have been made by the country particularly in the areas of economic management, a lot still remains to be accomplished. Growing inequality has, in particular, led to greater income poverty and insecurity. This has led to a rekindling of the debate on how to prevent more people from falling through the net, hence social protection.

This discussion paper is intended to contribute to the duo objective of creating greater awareness about Uganda's social protection needs, while at the same time opening up a debate on some of the inherent issues and options.

The paper builds on foundations created by numerous pieces of work on poverty and vulnerability as well as social protection in Uganda. It builds on initial discussions made by representatives of selected civil society organizations (CSOs), ideas on the role of tradition and culture in social protection which have been drawn from emerging findings of an on-going study by Cross Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU). It also draws on key findings from the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project (UPPAP), the Vulnerability and Poverty Analysis which accompanied design of Uganda's Pilot Cash Transfer Programme, and from a background paper on social protection in Uganda which was prepared by Devereux, Sabates-Wheeler and Lwanga-Ntale in 2002 for the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CMF	Commercial Micro-Finance
DRT	Development Research and Training
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MAAIF	Ministry of Agriculture Animals and Fisheries
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoGLSD	Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development
MoH	Ministry of Health
NCC	National Council for Children
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PEAP	Poverty Eradication Action Plan
PLA	Platform for Labour Action
PLWHA	People Living with HIV and Aids
PWD	People with Disabilities
SDIP	Social Development Investment Plan
UMF	Uganda Micro-Finance
UNHS	Uganda National Household Survey
UPE	Universal Primary Education
URAA	Uganda Reach the Aged Association
UWESO	Uganda Women's Effort to Serve Orphans

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Uganda is ranked among the best performing economies, as measured by GDP growth in Sub-Saharan Africa. Inflation has been controlled at an average of 5% and growth of real GDP averaged 5.5% per annum (Uganda Poverty Status Report 2005). This commendable achievement in macro-economic management notwithstanding, Uganda's social development indicators such as infant, child and maternal mortality remain among the worst in the world, according to the Human Development Report (2005). In addition, the Uganda Chronic Poverty Report (2005) estimates that 26% of the total population of Uganda (now well over 7 million people) lives in chronic poverty, with the majority being Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children (OVC), and those who rely on own account agriculture or on casual jobs. This variance in terms of translating the impressive macroeconomic performance into microeconomic socio-economic transformation, essential for development and a growing inequality has, in particular, led to greater income poverty and insecurity. This has led to a rekindling of the debate on how to prevent more people from falling through the net, hence social protection.

This publication is part of DRT's wider efforts to create awareness and stimulate discussion and interest on Social Protection in Uganda. It is intended to contribute to Uganda's social protection campaign for the chronically poor and its main purpose is therefore to; document the main issues in Social Protection in the country, share experiences about opportunities and challenges on implementing social protection, and to contribute to the evolution of a comprehensive Social Protection framework for Uganda.

The need for this paper specifically arises from the fact that;

- Many Ugandans remain trapped in poverty yet most current poverty eradication programs are not reaching them;
- Existing policy initiatives or frameworks are inadequate for protecting the very poor and vulnerable;
- No prioritized, consistent or coordinated framework or approach is in place to address risk and vulnerability, and this has implications on realization of equitable economic growth and development;
- The “stagnation” of 26% of Uganda's population in chronic poverty has a “pull back” factor on the rest of the population retarding economic growth thus leading to negative impacts on development outcomes;
- A large proportion of people living in chronic poverty narrow the taxable base, leading to low revenue collection vis-à-vis services demanded, while at the same time negatively affecting people's ability to purchase goods and services.

It is worth noting that significant efforts are being made by government and non-government actors to address the concerns of marginalized and vulnerable groups. Among others; at government level the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) and the Social Development's Investment Plan (SDIP) have been guiding frameworks for the implementation of programs that contribute to the realization of social protection objectives. Similarly, the increasing interest among development partners and Civil Society to increase the assets of the poor particularly of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups have seen the implementation of various programs across sectors and regions with significant results. However, these efforts are patchy, uncoordinated, sometimes duplicative and even at times omit key vulnerable categories of the poor. Worse still, many such interventions are not located within the broader conceptual or policy

framework for addressing the country's social protection needs.

It is envisaged that successful implementation of social protection interventions will promote growth, enhance human development, reduce vulnerability, improve access to social services, facilitate investment in assets, protect people's assets, help to deal with market failures, enhance social cohesion, among a host of benefits that accrue to the implementation of social protection.

For this however to be realized, all stakeholders must believe in and walk the talk on social protection for the chronically poor and vulnerable groups. There is need for a strong political leadership at the highest political level (including the national Parliament, the Presidency and the Cabinet). Political leaders should in particular be encouraged to play a greater role in developing the policy constituency for social protection and legitimating its policy discourse, including spreading actions to respond to vulnerability across a range of sectors such as, putting more emphasis on "Universal Vocational Training" as this tends to be more relevant and useful to children from vulnerable categories of the population, to supplement on existent and evolving initiatives such as Universal Secondary Education. Civil society on the other hand should in addition to their already impeccable contribution to development and social transformation create more awareness and advocate for social protection, compliment government efforts in service delivery, monitor implementation of social protection activities as well as engaging in capacity building programs for their partners.

While the expected benefits increase the urge for social protection in Uganda, various challenges are envisaged including; the absence of a clear legal and institutional framework to guide the implementation of social protection programmes which often results into the spread of interventions across ministries thus making implementation, coordination and monitoring impact hard, financing challenges specifically affordability and sustainability, soliciting political commitment and acceptability and lastly targeting challenges, resulting from the high levels of poverty and vulnerability which imply that a high percentage of people are likely to qualify for social protection.

Sustainability poses the biggest threat to implementation of social protection interventions given the fact that the fiscal space for a large commitment to a sustained social protection programme in Uganda is very limited, and further compounded by limited opportunities for expenditure switching. There is therefore a need to fully mainstream social protection into national planning and budgeting processes. In addition, future budgetary allocations to social protection should be made more sustainable than a series of uncoordinated externally-funded projects.

To further enhance sustainability of the social protection agenda, efforts should also be made to incorporate traditional and informal social protection mechanisms into the mainstream social protection strategy. Similarly, new social protection initiatives should take into account the cultural context, and programmes should not substitute existing solidarity mechanisms but build on them. Likewise, opportunities should be explored for capitalising on the spirit of social responsibility which is present in most communities.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is the first in a series of theme-focused papers which will be issued in the next 2-3 years by Development Research and Training (DRT), as part of the organisation's wider efforts to create awareness and to stimulate discussion and interest in Social Protection in Uganda. It is intended to contribute to the campaign for adoption of wide-ranging Social Protection policies and approaches which favour especially the chronically poor. The paper has been prepared by staff members of DRT, building on initial discussions made by representatives of selected Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)¹. Additional ideas on the role of tradition and culture in Social Protection have also been drawn into the paper from emerging findings of an on-going study by the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU). The paper also draws on key findings from the Uganda Participatory poverty Assessment Project (UPPAP), the Vulnerability and Poverty Analysis, which accompanied the design of Uganda's Pilot Cash Transfer Programme, and from a background paper on Social Protection in Uganda which was prepared by, Devereux, Rachel Sabates-Wheeler and Lwanga-Ntale (2002).

1.1 Why this Publication?

Improved knowledge and awareness are required about the factors and processes that pre-dispose Ugandans (individuals, households and communities) to deeper poverty. Not surprising, the growing risk and vulnerability, combined with persistent or chronic poverty, have brought back the Social Protection (SP) agenda to the centre stage of development. In spite of this, literature on social protection issues in Uganda, and hence awareness about the challenge, remains scanty. Poverty levels in Uganda may have been gradually falling - from over 56% in 1992, to 35% in 2000 and averaging 31% in 2006. However, according to the Uganda Chronic Poverty Report (2005), 26% of the total population of Uganda (now well over 7 million people) lives in chronic poverty. Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children (OVC), and those who rely on own account agriculture or on casual jobs, form the bulk of poverty-stricken Ugandans-over 70% of the poor. Poverty is further exacerbated by the high population growth rate, currently estimated at 3.57% which implies that by 2010, the population will be at 33 million and 55 million by 2025. A growing (but poor) population is itself inversely proportional to the rate at which the economy can grow. It exerts stress on the few resources while at the same time increasing income inequality, further marginalizing particular categories of the population, and creating inter- and intra-community tensions. Recent conflicts about land and other resources and rising crime are possible indicators of this tension.

The main purpose of this discussion paper, therefore, is to document the main issues in Social Protection in the country; to share experiences about opportunities and challenges; and ultimately to contribute to the evolution of a comprehensive Social Protection framework for Uganda.

During the period October 2007 and February 2008, a number of CSOs, working under the leadership of DRT, were tasked with preparing an issues paper on Social Protection to feed into the process of the National Development Plan (NDP) 2008-2012. Contributors to this process included: the Commonwealth Education Fund/Action Aid; Platform for Labour Action (PLA); The Uganda Reach the Aged Association (URAA); The National Council for Children (NCC); the Minority Rights Group; and New Horizons.

Box 1: Uganda's Economic Performance

Uganda's economic performance has in the last few years been deemed by most to be impressive. Inflation has been controlled at an average of 5% and growth of real GDP averaged 5.5% per annum (Uganda Poverty Status Report 2005). The major concern is however on sustaining the GDP growth; during the last two years, GDP growth figures have been on the decline from 5.4% in 2003/04 to 5.1 in 2005/06. This is still below the targeted growth rate of 7% if Uganda is to achieve the MDGs by 2015. In addition, the biggest contributor to the slow growth has been the decline in agricultural contribution (from 1.6 % in 2000/1 to 0.1% in 2005/6 (Background to the Budget 2006/7) and manufacturing (4.6% to -0.1%). This is because the agricultural sector is highly affected by weather, largely small hold and rain-fed. In the budget, allocation to Agriculture remains less than 4%, of the national budget and yet agriculture alone employs over 70% of the population hence while structural transformations are important in the longer term, more immediate gains in poor households' welfare can be achieved through agriculture, which would help the poor overcome some of the critical constraints they now face in meeting their basic needs. This is a pointer that growth is still elusive and hence more innovative poverty eradication efforts are still needed.

1.2. The importance of Social Protection

Social Protection is an important dimension in the reduction of poverty and multi-dimensional deprivation. As an approach it contributes to the processes, policies and interventions which respond to the economic, social, political and security risks and constraints that poor and vulnerable people face. In so doing it makes the poor and vulnerable less insecure and less poor, and more able to participate in economic growth. In this discussion paper we propose that the Uganda Government can, and should, describe the set of policies that it will pursue in order to provide protection both to the 'active poor', enabling them to participate more productively in economic activity, and to the less active poor, with considerable benefits for society as a whole. Such policies would help to fulfil the Government's obligations to ensure basic rights for all individuals. We further propose that Social Protection policies be always seen as being part of a broader set of policies – on macroeconomic stability, enterprise and employment development, health, and education – all of these aimed at reducing risk and vulnerability and encouraging pro-poor growth. The proposal stems from a growing awareness about the deep-seated nature of, especially, chronic poverty in Uganda and the role that social protection can play in addressing this. It is also borne out of the realization that:

- Many Ugandans remain trapped in poverty yet most current poverty eradication programs are not reaching them;
- Existing policy initiatives or frameworks are inadequate for protecting the very poor and vulnerable;
- No prioritized, consistent or coordinated framework or approach is in place to address risk and vulnerability, and this has implications on realization of equitable economic growth and development;
- "stagnation" for such a large proportion of the population in chronic poverty has a "pull back" factor on the rest of the population, further retarding economic growth, and having negative impacts on development outcomes;

- A large proportion of people living in chronic poverty narrows the taxable base, leading to low revenue collection vis-à-vis services demanded, while at the same time negatively affecting people's ability to purchase goods and services.

It is noteworthy that some efforts are being made by government and non-government actors to address the concerns of marginalized and vulnerable groups, and that at the policy level-the Uganda Government, through the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development's Investment Plan, the SDIP has committed to identifying and making interventions in the social development sector which are intended to strengthen the social capital of the poor and particularly of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Similarly, there is increased donor and civil society interest to pursue the same agenda of increasing the assets of the poor.

However, as already observed these efforts are patchy, uncoordinated, sometimes duplicative and even at times omit key vulnerable categories of the poor. Worse still many such interventions are not located within the broader conceptual or policy framework for addressing the country's social protection needs.

1.3. Historical evolution of social protection in Uganda

Social Protection in Uganda, like in most Sub-Saharan Africa, is firmly rooted in the country's local institutions and traditions. The popular view is that pre-colonial Africans lived in mutual support networks of community, extended family and clan groups. 'Reciprocity and social cohesion [were] the two pillars of traditional social protection . . . acts of reciprocity, altruism, social cohesion and personal intimacies were sufficient to guarantee social protection in both good and bad times to all members of any ethnic nationality by ensuring equity and social justice (Ouma 1995: 6).

Some of the traditional social organizations included;

- *Bulungi Bwa Nsi* ("For the good of the Country")- this represented the tradition of voluntary work on public projects
- *Munno Mu Kabi* ("friend in need")-representing the tradition of mutual assistance

Regrettably, over the years, there has been an erosion of many of these informal support systems, a process that some scholars have often attributed to the disruptive impacts of colonialism, "commodification", and more recently globalization (with the related challenges of growing materialism). Politically, the undermining of village- and clan-based power relationships 'inevitably undermined the authority of the kinship system in matters of socialization and social control – thus in turn undermining its ability to protect socially vulnerable groups such as the aged and the sick' (Ouma 1995: 6). Economically, the commercialization of labour and the increasing cash orientation of economic activity (to pay taxes or purchase goods and services) undermined individual acts of altruism or reciprocity (e.g. neighbors assisting each other with farming chores) or collective efforts (e.g. building or maintaining community infrastructure).

In Uganda, the post-independence political turbulence and state violence of the 1970s and early 1980s, and the scourge of HIV/AIDS have been key factors in eroding or demolishing informal social protection

mechanisms, not only due to the death or displacement of individuals, families and entire communities, but also because of the stress and strain which the pandemic has imposed on surviving individuals and households.

While these informal social mechanisms have diminished in terms of effectiveness, they nonetheless still exist in small communities and mainly rural areas. Similarly, in spite of the challenges they face, and the extent of their “stretch” notwithstanding, informal social protection mechanisms remain the main form of support especially in the rural countryside, and it might reasonably be argued that it is the formal government propelled social protection mechanisms which supplement this effort.

To champion the concern of addressing poverty, risk and vulnerability, a specific Government Ministry was created-the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development to coordinate all programmes and activities relating to a range of vulnerable categories of people. It was hoped that this Ministry would effectively link its work with that of the Ministry of Local Government, working through the decentralized system of governance (adopted in 1997 with an overarching objective of bringing services closer to the people, improving citizen participation in development processes and fostering transparency and accountability in the delivery of services). To some extent, it is through this framework that a few social-protection-related programmes have been implemented.

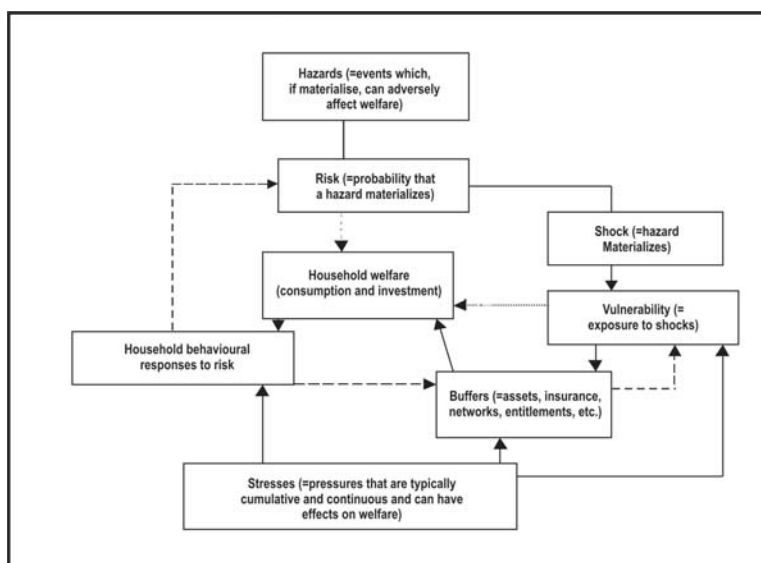
POVERTY, RISK AND VULNERABILITY IN UGANDA

2.1. Defining poverty, risk and vulnerability

How we define poverty, risk and vulnerability is critical as the definitions have implications on the types of “solutions” that are sought or proposed. Overall, poverty in Uganda is defined as the inability to meet basic necessities of life, poor access and quality of social services and inadequate infrastructure. A person or household is considered to be poor when they are unable to meet basic needs, such as clothing, health care, school tuition, decent housing. A poor individual or household is also deemed to have limited physical or economic assets (MFPED 2000). A narrower and more commonly encountered definition of poverty describes it as a low level of income or consumption, while vulnerability is described as the risk of falling into poverty (Devereux, Lwanga-Ntale and Sabates 2002: 11). Risk is itself defined as the probability associated with the occurrence of a hazard, and hazards are events which, if materialize, can adversely affect welfare (Kasaija, 2006)

Broadly, vulnerability in Uganda consists of four closely related, though different, categories of the poor or marginally poor, namely: (1) those who live in chronic poverty; (2) those who are sliding into chronic poverty in the future due to some trend evolution; (3) those that are likely to become poor due to predictable events (such as seasonality); and, (4) those likely to become poor due to risks and shocks. While the focus of Government’s programmes has to-date been on the last group², the other groups, including those facing seasonality, should not be excluded.

Linkages from vulnerability to welfare



Source: Armando (September 2004) Financing Social Protection

²For example the Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture programme emphasises working with the “active poor”.

Using a slightly different typology Devereux et al, also identify four sources of vulnerability in Uganda, namely: economic, demographic, political, and socio-cultural.

■ **Economic/Livelihood risks:** These include both:

- (1) The *'currently poor'*: despite Uganda's progress in poverty reduction during the 1990s, 31% of the population remains below the poverty line, and inequality is rising (UBoS, 2006);
- (2) The *'potentially poor'*: adverse changes in the macroeconomic context (e.g. terms of trade shocks) or the regulatory framework (e.g. deregulation) push certain groups of Ugandans into poverty at different times, but few safety nets are in place to address these contingencies.

■ **Physical/Health risks:** These include:

- (1) The permanent vulnerability that attaches to certain *fixed personal characteristics* (gender, lifelong physical or mental disability);
- (2) The periodic vulnerability associated with specific *life-cycle stages* (the very young, adolescents, pregnant and lactating women, the elderly);
- (3) The vulnerability associated with certain forms of *household composition* (single-parent, child-headed and elderly-headed households, especially widows living alone).

■ **Political/Institutional risks:** These include the risks to personal safety and security that accompany *conflict* between groups, such as displacement, injury and disability.

■ **Socio-cultural risks:** These include:

- (1) At the *group level*: socially sanctioned discrimination and social exclusion of certain groups such as ethnic minorities (e.g. Batwa pygmies);
- (2) At the *individual level*: abuse of children and women (including domestic violence).

2.2. The nature of risk and vulnerability in Uganda

Drawing from the above narratives, therefore, it may be concluded that risks are faced at various levels and in different ways in Uganda. They do not just relate to income poverty, or the more established challenges in the formal sector, such as loss of employment (as was for example the case during the years of public service sector reforms – referred to as “retrenchment”), but also involve markets, public policy and social capital. Assets themselves, their transformation into incomes and in turn transformation of the incomes into dimensions of well-being are also subject to risk. For example the physical assets of populations in Northern and North Eastern Uganda were greatly affected by the flooding which was witnessed in the region during the latter part of 2007, among other things predisposing large sections of the population to food insecurity. Similarly the long-running conflict in Northern Uganda has over time led to the erosion of social and human capital due to ill-health or unemployment, the collapse of asset markets and values, problems with property rights and their enforcement, etc.



Huts in a camp for displaced people at Lira Palwo camp, Pader District³

We have already observed in the foregoing discussion that the transformation of assets into income is subject to risk. Beyond the obvious but important factors, such as climate or health, there are also *inter alia* price risks, risks to access of rationed inputs, risks of exclusion from informal or formal safety nets, problems related to contract enforcement and risks to changes in policy. Entitlements from incomes are also mediated by risk, including price risk but also and importantly, risks related to imperfect information and to the provision of public goods and services, especially since they often are rationed.

2.3. Coping with, and responding to, risks

Different risks have quite different implications for the ability to cope with them, as well as for policy. It is also reasonable to expect that the extent to which the Uganda Government will respond will depend on whether the shocks occur regularly or predictably; whether they are rare but very large; whether they occur at the same time across individuals, rather than being individual-specific; etc. The impacts created by the long-running conflict in Northern Uganda, for example, in due course led to establishment of the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) – a social protection intervention. Similarly, the shocks which the HIV/AIDS pandemic caused on the country seemed to have gained importance but not so much because individuals were feeling the impact but rather when the scale of the problem was revealed to be very big, intractable, and growing, thus triggering the multi-sectoral response to HIV/AIDS. These observations notwithstanding most households and individuals in Uganda are aware of the existence of the different sources of risk and they actively try to cope with the risks in a variety of ways, using well-documented strategies, although increasingly, individual, household and community capacity to cope is limited.

³ The Conflict in Northern Uganda has displaced nearly 2 million people. Though a sizable number of people returned to their homes, many are still living in the camps.



Children like these benefit from NUSAF's support to education in a conflict affected zone in Pader District

Elsewhere, it has been argued that well-being and poverty are the ex-post outcome of a complicated decision process of individuals and households over assets and incomes, faced with risk, while vulnerability to poverty is the ex-ante situation, i.e. before one has knowledge of the actual shocks that will occur (**Dercon, 2001**). Vulnerability is determined by the options available to households and individuals to make a living, the risks they face and their ability to handle the risk.

2.4. Vulnerability and policy

Any policy which the Uganda Government will put in place to try and reduce vulnerability will have to start from having an understanding of the nature of vulnerability faced by individuals, households and communities. To a large extent this challenge has been overcome by the numerous studies which Government and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have conducted on poverty and vulnerability⁴. Furthermore, it is important to develop an understanding of the different sources of risks faced by individuals, households, and communities and their relative importance. This would then need to be followed by a study of how risk affects assets, incomes and entitlements, ex-ante and ex-post, and an understanding of the ways these individuals, households and communities cope with risk.

⁴ Examples of such studies include the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment (UPPAP), the Risk and Vulnerability study which accompanied the Cash Transfer Design (2007), the study conducted by Devereux, Lwanga-Ntale and Sabates-Wheeler (2002) on Social Protection in Uganda: Vulnerability Assessment and Review of Initiatives. This study was conducted to inform the development of a Framework for Social Protection in the Context of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan.

2.5. Who are vulnerable in Uganda?

Table 1: The main “vulnerable groups” in Uganda

Conflict Related	Demographic Categories	Poverty-Related
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Refugees ▪ Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) ▪ War Orphans ▪ Abductees ▪ Traumatized Civilians ▪ Households living in or near conflict zones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assetless widows and widowers ▪ Orphans and abandoned children ▪ Female-headed households ▪ Child-headed households ▪ People living with Disabilities (PWDs) ▪ Chronically sick ▪ Victims of domestic violence ▪ Ethnic minorities ▪ Street Children 	<p>Urban</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Urban unemployed ▪ Low paid workers ▪ Informal sector workers ▪ Beggars ▪ Squatters <p>Rural</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rural landless ▪ Cash-crop farmers ▪ Pastoralists ▪ Plantation workers

Source; Devereux et al (2002)

2.6. What is the magnitude of vulnerability?

According to the Uganda National household survey 2005/06, of Uganda’s total population, projected at 27.2 million, 50.6% are under 15 years of age compared to 49.6% in 1992/93 and is even more likely to increase if the current population growth rate remains unchecked. Approximately, 15 percent of children below 18 years are orphans while 18 percent of those aged 5-17 are engaged in child labour activities. The national disability rate, according to the survey, was 7 percent, of which 20 percent had multiple disabilities⁵. In addition, approximately 80 percent of people with disabilities live below the poverty line, and 46 percent of PWDs aged 14-64 declared that they were excluded from accessing employment opportunities. Meanwhile, the population of older persons in Uganda was estimated at 6.1 % and is expected to rise to 20% of the total population by 2025.

Similarly, a report on indigenous peoples in Africa (2006) by The African Commission on Human Rights and Peoples’ Rights, lists the Batwa, Pokot, Karimojong and Benet as some of Uganda’s marginalized indigenous peoples who need serious government attention. The report notes that these communities have their unique constraints that hinder them from accessing development processes and actions targeted at the national majority.

The vulnerable groups by virtue of their demographic, geographical and poverty related characteristics are often excluded from benefiting from mainstream poverty eradication efforts. Exclusion notwithstanding, vulnerable groups are the most affected by shocks both endogenous (idiosyncratic) and exogenous (covariant)⁶ which only reinforces their poverty, let alone driving them into deeper poverty.

⁵ It is estimated that the disability rate is much higher than this, and that the lower figures may be due to the definitions used in the 2002 Population and Housing Census and because of translation difficulties.

⁶ Exogenous shocks are external threats to livelihood security (e.g. climate in agro-ecological areas, market collapse, theft, civil strife), while endogenous relates to internal capability of a household or community (loss of human, physical and financial capital).

Relating vulnerability to social protection, targeted income transfers under these circumstances provides 'economic protection' in response to economic risks and livelihood vulnerability while more direct forms of 'social protection' would address distinct problems of 'social vulnerability', not necessarily through resource transfers, but through delivery of social services, and through measures to modify or regulate behaviour towards socially vulnerable groups.

ENGAGING WITH THE CONCEPT AND PRACTICE OF SOCIAL PROTECTION

3.1. What is social protection?

Thus far we have skirted around the definition of the term Social Protection. This was done on purpose, to give the definition a suitable context. Social Protection is a term that has been used very often but also abused by various actors in the development discourse. Different sets of stakeholders perceive social protection in very different ways (Devereux, Sabates-Wheeler and Lwanga-Ntale 2002:3) For example:

- (i) Some people adopt a very broad approach, to include such interventions as Universal Primary Education (UPE), micro-credit support, and job creation programmes, as well as safety nets for groups that may be vulnerable to shocks, but are not usually regarded as among the poorest strata of society (e.g. coffee farmers facing falling prices for their produce).
- (ii) Others see social protection narrowly, essentially as a new label for old-style social welfare provided to conventionally define ‘vulnerable groups’ (e.g. people living with HIV/AIDS, people with disabilities, widows, and orphans).
- (iii) Others yet hold a more ‘political’ or ‘transformative’ view, extending social protection to arenas of equity, empowerment and ‘social rights’, rather than confining the definition to targeted income and consumption transfers.

The World Bank suggests that Social Protection consists of public measures intended to assist individuals, households and communities in managing income risks in order to reduce vulnerability and downward fluctuations in incomes, improve consumption smoothing and enhancing quality (Devereux, Lwanga-Ntale and Sabates 2002:3) On the other hand the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) describes it as “a set of public actions taken in response to levels of vulnerability, risk and deprivation which are deemed socially unacceptable within a given polity or society (Devereux, Lwanga-Ntale and Sabates 2002:3).

Narrow perceptions about the definition and implementation of Social Protection both in literature and among policy-makers has bred a lot of misconceptions about the concept and in turn influenced its adaptability.

On one hand, for example, it is argued that Social Protection is required in response to a set of economic problems or livelihood shocks – ‘in response to [unacceptable] levels of vulnerability, risk and deprivation’,

‘managing income risks’, ‘protection against low or declining living standards’, ‘protecting individuals from the risks inherent in earning a living’ (Devereux, Lwanga-Ntale and Sabates 2002:4)

Elsewhere social protection interventions are viewed as only responding to a set of problems – either ‘low’ levels of income or living standards; or ‘downward fluctuations in incomes’ and ‘declining living standards’ (Devereux, Lwanga-Ntale and Sabates 2002:4). There is a large body of development practitioners who would refer to social protection as ‘public actions’, ‘public or collective measures’, or ‘a set of policies and programs’ that are delivered mainly through ‘public’ (government) agencies.

Whatever definition is adopted, social protection is intended to address, in addition to responding to economic problems and livelihood risks, ‘social risks’ such as child labour, domestic violence, armed conflict, discrimination and social marginalization. In broad terms it should address both types of livelihood threats, namely: vulnerability associated with ‘being poor’ (for which social assistance is needed), and vulnerability associated with the risk of ‘becoming poor’ (for which social insurance is needed). It should also address social problems arising from poverty and inequality (for which ‘social equity’ is needed). Evidently, therefore, social protection interventions are not only addressed by public institutions (government) but encompass a wide range of community-based and private sector institutions’ driven actions. (Devereux, Lwanga-Ntale and Sabates 2002:4)

From the above analysis, it is therefore possible to conceptualize Social Protection as “all public and private initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks, and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalized; with the overall objective of reducing the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable and marginalized groups” (Devereux and Sabates 2004). In adopting this definition, it should be added, Social Protection should also be fully recognized as a “right” as opposed to a “welfarist” approach to addressing risk and vulnerability.

While the above definition provides a good working framework, it should also be observed that extending the definition of social protection may itself have the effect of diluting its focus. Arguably, an exclusive focus on shocks is not the answer to focusing the social protection needs of any population, especially given that many households are in any case in a downward trajectory even in the absence of shocks. However in this paper we would argue that it is beneficial to narrow the focus so that specific attention can be paid to design and implementation of the required programmes. Either way, any social protection interventions which are proposed or implemented should help to address the preventative, protective, promotive, and transformative objectives.

3.2 Social Protection Types and Interventions

The key components of Social Protection include **Social assistance** which encompasses all “non-contributory transfers to those deemed eligible by society on the basis of their vulnerability or poverty” (may take the form of cash transfers, school feeding programmes, public works schemes, etc); **Basic social services** which are basic services provided to the citizens by the state as a right (such as health, education, and water); **Social insurance**: which consists of those instruments that enable individuals to pool their resources in order to provide support in the case of a shock to their livelihoods (examples include contributory pensions, health insurance programs, and informal group schemes: e.g. funeral

insurance; and, **Social equity** which aims at protecting people against social risks such as discrimination or abuse (such as good and worker-friendly labour laws, setting and enforcing minimum standards in the workplace, legislation and enforcement dealing with a broader set of rights issues (for example, land rights; racial discrimination; gender equality).

3.3 What is an appropriate mix of social protection interventions?

The key objective of social protection is to reduce vulnerability of the poor and can be categorized under protective, preventive, promotive and transformative measures (Devereux and Sabates 2004).

Protective measures; these provide relief from deprivation. Protective measures are narrowly targeted safety net measures in the conventional sense – they aim to provide relief from poverty and deprivation to the extent that promotional and preventive measures have failed to do so. For protection from relief, social assistance programs are recommended and these include among others; targeted resource transfers – disability benefit, single-parent allowances, and “social pensions” for the elderly poor that are financed publicly – out of the tax base, with and sometimes without donor support, and/or through NGO projects.

Uganda is yet to pilot its first non-conditional cash transfer scheme targeting chronically poor and vulnerable groups. The cash transfer is to respond to the rising income poverty and inequality reflected by the numbers of persons living in chronic poverty, many of whom are currently not being reached by mainstream development programs.

Other protective measures can be classified as *social services*. These would be for the poor and groups needing special care, including orphanages and reception centres for abandoned children, feeding camps and provision of services for refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and the abolition of health and education charges (as with Uganda’s Universal Primary Education policy) in order to extend access to basic services to the very poor.

Preventive measures; these seek to avert deprivation. Preventive measures deal directly with poverty alleviation. They include *social insurance* for “economically vulnerable groups” – people who have fallen or might fall into poverty, and may need support to help them manage their livelihood shocks. In this case, it would be appropriate to have social insurance programmes such as formalized systems of pensions, health insurance, and maternity benefit and unemployment benefits, often with tripartite financing between employers, employees and the state. Other initiatives to avert deprivation can include informal mechanisms, such as savings clubs and funeral societies, risk diversification strategies such as crop or income diversification among others.

Promotive measures aim to enhance real incomes and capabilities, which is achieved through a range of livelihood-enhancing programmes targeted at households and individuals, such as microfinance and school feeding.

Transformative measures; these seek to address concerns of *social equity* and exclusion, such as collective action for workers’ rights, or upholding human rights for minority ethnic groups. *Transformative* interventions include changes to the regulatory framework to protect “socially vulnerable groups” (e.g. people with disabilities, or victims of domestic violence) against discrimination and abuse,

as well as sensitization campaigns (such as the ‘HIV/AIDS Anti-Stigma Campaign’, to transform public attitudes and behaviour and enhance social equity.

It should however be noted that the above categories are sometimes mutually reinforcing and overlapping in promoting incomes as well as preventing deprivation and therefore should not be considered in isolation.

3.4. The role of traditional Social Protection mechanisms

A hitherto little-addressed matter is that of the role played by traditional social protection mechanisms. Research findings emerging from a study on culture and social protection in Uganda, which is being undertaken by the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda, points us to some preliminary conclusions. The research observes, first, that ethnic culture counts in social protection, and for the benefit of social protection design and programming it is possible to conclude from the findings so far that Ugandan communities evolve in a cultural context that is still much informed by their traditions, values and practices. Two important implications are that policy initiatives for social protection ought to take into account the cultural context, and that development programmes including anti poverty initiatives should not substitute existing solidarity mechanisms but build on them⁷.

The study also reveals a mixed picture of “traditional” social protection mechanisms, some withering away, and others changing and adapting to new circumstances, but that these mechanisms are not sufficient to address the economic and social challenges (which have increased in number and magnitude) that communities are facing. Nevertheless, when the very poor experience extreme hardship, they can (at least at times and for a time), turn to such mechanisms, or at least to the values of solidarity that have (and do still) inform them, for support⁸.

The same study observes that although some of the traditional practices died with the abolition of the traditional kingdoms, the (social protection) principles which they held are still useful⁹. The implication here is that with the restoration of the kingdoms, some of these practices may be revived in a way that responds to the current challenges and context. Similarly, some mechanisms have been observed to show resilience, adaptability and a degree of inclusiveness that can provide opportunities for future growth. Among these are the *Munno mukabi* mechanisms in central Uganda – which retain the principles of helping one in need, and which have actually incorporated these principles into new development groups. Opportunities should be explored for capitalising on the spirit of social responsibility to help those in need which is created by these mechanisms.

There are additional opportunities of a social protection nature in the traditional mechanisms. For example, the compulsory homestead granary or “stored root food” in the past ensured better food security, and if adapted to present circumstances could provide an opportunity for addressing shocks due to food crises. In relation to this, current rural development programmes could incorporate aspects of ‘food security for all’ by restoring the principle of saving seed and food in the communities. Such initiatives

⁷ For details of this study see Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda (2007): Culture and social protection for the very poor in Uganda: Evidence and policy implications (unpublished – forthcoming)

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

could include collective efforts to establish home gardens recognizing non-monetary contributions such as labour, to enable the very poor have a stake in the food and seed stored.

Other opportunities include provision of additional support to local administrative authorities for them to be able to address critical concerns of the very poor and to ensure that these are included in initiatives that do not necessarily involve monetary contributions. Besides, efforts could also be made to revive values that encourage the support that the youth give to the elderly/ vulnerable (such as to repair simple structures, compound maintenance, sanitation, etc) and to incorporate this as part of development initiatives laying a foundation for future social responsibility for the elderly and vulnerable. This may involve targeting the youth for training in basic construction skills, teamwork and sensitisation on social responsibility. This area may need further research to explore other cases where the youth can support vulnerable members of their communities¹⁰.

¹⁰ Ibid.

CURRENT SOCIAL PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS AND GAPS

4.1. The Uganda Government's commitment to Social Protection

Uganda is one of 13 African countries which participated at the high level intergovernmental conference on Social Protection held in Livingstone, Zambia, in March 2006, where commitment to Social Protection among African countries was reaffirmed. Recognizing the considerable benefits which can accrue from the introduction of social protection programmes, delegates at the conference urged the respective African governments to invest in social transfer programmes to address growing vulnerability and extreme poverty. A call was made for the introduction of social pensions and social transfers to a cross-section of vulnerable children, men and women, including older persons, people with disabilities, orphans and other vulnerable children, and many others who live in chronic poverty.

A wide range of Governmental and CSO programmes have in the past been implemented to address risk and vulnerability issues, thereby supporting the attainment of Social Protection objectives. However, this has been done with varying levels of success, or even consistency and coordination. The Poverty Eradication Plan (PEAP) has itself been described as a “social protection-friendly” construction as it suggests interventions in health, education, water and sanitation and social development as priority actions for reducing poverty and vulnerability (DRT 2006). This is echoed in the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, under the National Objective and Directive Principles of State Policy XIV “charges the state to endeavor to fulfill the fundamental rights of all Ugandans to social justice and economic development and shall, in particular, (XIV (b)) ensure that all Ugandans enjoy rights and opportunities and access to education, health services, clean and safe water, work, decent shelter, adequate clothing, food security and pension and retirement benefits”.

At the policy level, the Social Development Sector has developed the following policies which contribute to the realization of objectives of social protection;

- The National Orphans and Vulnerable Children Policy;
- The National Policy on Elimination of Child Labour;
- The National Policy on Disability;
- The National Equal Opportunities Policy;
- The National Gender Policy;

At the program level, several programs have been implemented as highlighted in Table below;

Table 2: Some examples of programmes and projects responding to Social Protection needs and their location

	Programme/s	Financing Mechanisms	Authority or Government Ministry Responsible/ Implementing Body	Remarks/Comments
1	Northern Social Action Fund(NUSAF) (<i>targets poor communities, vulnerable and disadvantaged social groups.</i>)	Development Assistance (World Bank), Government of Uganda	Office of the Prime Minister (OPM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase in the number of districts affects targeting and allocation of resources, ▪ Poor accountability systems have led to loss of huge amounts of funds ▪ Interference in implementation by politicians has led to lack of transparent mechanisms in delivering support to the needy
2	Micro-Finance Schemes - Former Entandikwa Credit Scheme , Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme, PAP, NURP- Northern Uganda Reconstruction, South West Agricultural Rehabilitation Project(SWARP), <i>Private sector (e.g. CMF, UMF, FINCA), Respective NGOs (e.g. MED-NET – an affiliate of World Vision Uganda)</i>	Development Assistance (World Bank), Local Financing (Taxation)	MOGLSD/OPM, Private sector initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Target economically active poor and often times charges exorbitant interest rates hence unaffordable by the chronic poor. ▪ Lack of investment advice to loan seekers led to more impoverishment as most clients misused the money and in loan recovery process had most of their properties e.g. land confiscated
3	Community HIV/AIDS Initiative(CHAI) (<i>Offered support to individuals and households with HIV/AIDS in the form of cash, training</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development Assistance(World Bank) 	Local Government/ Ministry of Health,Uganda Aids Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implemented in 30 districts of Uganda- Demand driven yet the poorest of the poor are powerless to demand ▪ Project run for a three-year period and closed thereafter.
4	Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development Assistance (World Bank), UNICEF and USAID. 	MOGLSD/Children's Organizations(World Vision, UWESO, UNICEF) and other CSO/CBO initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Various programmes run by both government and CSOs but little is documented on extent of coverage; ▪ Models of implementation vary considerably – from one project to another;
6	Universal Primary Education (<i>Provides free primary education to all children of primary school going age</i>)	Uganda National Budget; Development Assistance	Ministry of Education and Sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Many OVC are unable to access free basic education due to inability to meet non-tuition costs, further compounding their vulnerability ▪ Inequalities in access to education including: urban-rural inequalities; geographical inequalities; high drop out rates ▪ Children with disabilities still missing out on this intervention
7	Government Pension schemes (<i>Targets retired civil servants</i>)	Local Financing by Government	Ministry of public Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Many districts/ local Governments cannot effectively or sustainably pay Pension to their Ex- Civil servants due to low revenue e.g. the scheme has 314 billion shillings of un paid pension claims ▪ Absence of reliable birth registration data makes it difficult for pension office to verify correct age of claimants

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targets only a small proportion of elderly persons.
8.	National Social Security Fund <i>(Provides social insurance for retired workers in the formal sector who would have contributed to the scheme during their working period)</i>	Local Financing by members contributions and government	Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development/National Social Security Fund (NSSF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age of benefit is 55 years and 60 years for members to the NSSF and the Public Service Pension Scheme. This maturity age is way above the life expectancy of most Ugandans today which stands at 47 years. This implies that a fund member may be destitute or even long dead before they can access and enjoy their benefits Only caters for workers in the formal sector employment-only 4.8 % of total population. over 95% are employed in the private/self employed and informal sector, with almost 70% of Uganda's working population in agriculture; Has perennially faced allegations of financial impropriety.
9.	Minimum Health Care Package	Development Assistance and Local Financing	Ministry of Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The poor are meant to access services but barriers such negative attitude by health workers towards the old and children, PWDs compounds vulnerability and limits access Hidden costs to pay limits access by the chronically poor
10.	School Feeding Program	MOE, Development Agencies.	MOE, WFP, Save the Children, ACD VOCA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implemented only in parts of Northern and North Eastern Uganda) – some are conditional on children attending school for a minimum number of days per week.
11.	(Alternative Basic Education Karamoja(ABEK/ Complementary Opportunity Programme Education(COPE) in pastoral and fishing communities in Karamoja and Kalangala	Development Assistance/ Local Financing	MOE , Save the Children, UNICEF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided to hard to reach areas. Little efforts made to use learning from this to inform education processes in other migrant communities
12.	Psycho -Social support for HIV/AIDS and conflict prone areas.	Development Assistance	Ministry of HealthTASO, AIC, UNICEF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides psycho- social support to affected populations as result of traumatic experiences; Limited direct financial investment by Government
13.	Food Aid/ Food for work in Karamoja	Development Assistance(World Bank)	WFPPrime Minister's Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's on- going intervention for conflict and drought prone areas.
14.	Community-Based Rehabilitation Programme	Development Assistance	Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implemented for persons with disabilities (PWDs) Being implemented in 13 districts
15.	Health Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Financing Member contributions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of health Private sector initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Still at the design stage; Intended to target the formally employed who can contribute a percentage of their income to the scheme; Will by design exclude the chronically poor
16.	Informal networks- Burial groups, merry-go-round groups rounds and Village Saving clubs	Local financing	MGLSD. Local Associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given endemic HIV/AIDS and continued conflict in the country, traditional social networks and safety nets are key coping mechanisms for the chronically poor.

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They are affordable, accessible and owned by communities but need recognition by Government and support financially.
17.	PMA/NAADS (covers 29 districts)	Government and Development Assistance	MAAIF/PMA SECRETARIAT, NGO interventions(E.g. SOCADIDO, VEDCO).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeting the economically active poor, demand driven yet the poorest of the poor are powerless to demand, and, market oriented. Does not target specific needs of OVCs such as people living with HIV/AIDS.
18.	Early Childhood and Nutrition Project	Development Assistance(World Bank)	Ministry of Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor accountability systems led to misuse of funds and closure of project.
19.	NGO programs (various) e.g. UWESO, World Vision, SOCADIDO		Respective organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides social support to orphans and vulnerable children (e.g. education, health, psychosocial, income generation support) Emergency relief Agricultural support targeting women and PWDS
20.	TASO (Provides psycho-social support and material support to PLWA)		NGO Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides psycho-social support and material support to PLWA
21.	Burial groups (Provide material support and psycho-social support when one loses a relative)	Respective groups	Community Based Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of material and social support in times of need e.g. loss of family members. These are key coping mechanisms for many rural poor.
22.	Local credit and savings groups	Respective groups	Community Based Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide saving mechanisms to members Give members access to some credit
23.	Insurance schemes (Provide health and other insurance to members who can afford to pay the yearly premium)	Private Sector Initiatives	Private Sector Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited knowledge about insurance services among the population limits access to and use of insurance services
24.	Scaling Up Savings To Augment Income Nationally (SUSTAIN) , The Social Mobilization of Women Affected by Conflict (SOMAC), Community Action Against Sexual and Gender Based Violence in IDP camps – Northern Uganda, The Community Responses to HIV/AIDS (CORE) Initiative:	DFID	CARE International in Uganda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide access to credit and social support to OVCs
25.	Voucher for Input scheme (implemented in Adjumani, Moyo and Yumbe Districts. Targets refugee hosting communities with a purpose of improving agricultural production through provision of vouchers for agricultural inputs e.g. drugs, seedlings, hoes, boots etc in return for community project undertaken)	Development Partners (Danida)	Appropriate Technology Uganda, Uganda National Association of Input Dealers (UNADA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often duplicated other efforts such as NAADS Targets only active poor, thus a vast majority of OVCs, the elderly and people with disability are left out.

4.2. Gaps in provision

While the implemented programs have positively contributed to overall poverty reduction, macro-economic stability and growth, the persistent and deep-seated nature of poverty has brought to the spotlight the (in)effectiveness of the interventions in playing the preventive, protective, promotive and transformative roles. As has already been pointed out in the preceding sections, current anti-poverty interventions, and interventions to reduce risk and vulnerability, focus mostly on the “active poor” or the “working poor” thus leaving out a large (and perhaps growing number) of the poor. The impact of having a large proportion of “un-reached” poor and vulnerable groups is that such groups will continue to be trapped, or even sink into deeper poverty which jeopardizes efforts to realize the Millennium Development Goals.

In addition, there is still a limited and varied understanding of social protection even among the key policy makers, made worse by the fact that the otherwise commendable efforts are not located in a known or coordinated framework. Apart from this, there are also concerns about past experiences of corruption and lack of institutional capacity to manage social protection interventions that have a money component in them. Among the middle class there is also a tendency to label social protection as a “welfarist” approach. As described in the foregoing narrative, a number of government and non-government social protection interventions are in place, but these are neither inter-linked nor coordinated. They remain patchy and scattered and have a high potential to be duplicative of each other’s efforts, or to omit particular categories of the vulnerable or geographical areas.

Case Study 1: The Universal Primary Education

The introduction of Universal Primary Education, (UPE), increased enrollment in primary schools from 3 million pupils in 1997 when the program was first introduced to about 7.5 million in 2003 and over 7.6 million in 2005/06 (UNHS, UBoS 2005/6). While a lot of progress has been made by government in increasing spending on education and specifically primary education, there are still major challenges in respect to realizing the full benefits of UPE. In the 2007/8 national budget, government allocated a total sum of Uganda Shillings 417.7 billion to finance the primary and pre-primary sector. Important to note is that 342.5 billion shillings was expected to be spent on paying salaries of the 129,000 teachers in UPE, which leaves only about 75.2 billion to implement other UPE programs.

Limited financing aside, about 1.3 million children aged 6 to 12 years (school going age) are still excluded from UPE (Beekunda 2007) and therefore from enjoyment of their right to education. Most of the children excluded from UPE are Orphans and Vulnerable Children and those living in chronic poverty. This according to studies has been attributed to the failure by poor parents to raise/meet additional non-tuition costs/requirements related to school attendance such as provision of uniforms, scholastic materials, and examination fees, among others.

Lack of lunch at schools is also documented as one of the main causes for the high drop out rates (UNHS, UBoS 2005/6). Other causes are attributed to low attention in prioritizing Special Needs Education (SNE) for PWDs such as training of SNE teachers. Cultural practices such as girls being given away in early marriages “in order to fetch an income in bride price” and children engaging in income generating activities and exploitative child labour also play a part.

The cost implications of so many children missing out on education are quite considerable, and such children will be more likely to fall into exploitative labour, or be unable to contribute to national economic growth in the future. Given also that 50% of the Orphans and Vulnerable Children under the age of 18 years are under the

care of older persons whose capacity to subsist is rather limited further sinks families and households into deeper poverty. High drop-out rates make the situation worse, especially in rural areas, where the majority of those who are trapped in poverty live. Close to 50% of pupils who enroll in Primary One do not complete Primary Seven in the set timeframe for example, only 22% of those who enrolled in Primary One in 1997 registered for Primary Leaving Examinations in 2003 (CDI 2007), a situation that has not improved much in recent years. According to the 2007 Primary Leaving Examination (PLE) results, only 444,019 of the 890,997 who enrolled in 2001 sat for the examinations in 2007 (Quoted in the New Vision Newspaper of Monday 21st January 2008, Page 12).

The second Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA II) identified "*hunger and poor nutrition*" as the key cause of absenteeism and drop-out from school, hence exclusion from an opportunity to access education. Most pupils are unable to carry a packed lunch, and many travel long distances to attend school, especially in rural areas. Those who stay on at school forego lunch, thus learning on "empty" stomachs. This also contributes to the high school drop out rate but also to the declining nutritional status among the pupils, poor education standards and consequently to declining human capital. Such children will not be able to steer the country sustainably on the path of economic growth, employment and prosperity, and without strategic Social Protection interventions, the children are more likely to drop out of school.

Impact assessment of school feeding programs from Uganda and other countries have established that enrolment, attendance, concentration in class and performance in examinations can all be enhanced through the provision of a meal to learners. In North and Eastern Uganda where a school feeding program was introduced in 1,360 schools, already 12% of the children enrolled in UPE are benefiting from this program (Beekunda 2007). Similarly, in Karamoja, provision of free food (lunch) at school under the Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK) has attracted about 42,250 learners in Karamoja, of which 1,427 have since crossed to formal education system (Save the Children Uganda, 2006).

Therefore, a well designed and implemented *National School Feeding Program* would not only help the 1.3 million children and more that drop out of school to access education and uplift educational standards, but also improve nutritional standards, thus contributing simultaneously to the realization of the Education for All (EFA) goals, achievement of the MDG targets on primary education, and contributing to reduction in nutrition-related morbidity and mortality. In addition, a well educated population improves their chances of securing better paid employment in adult life thus improving on competitiveness of the national population.

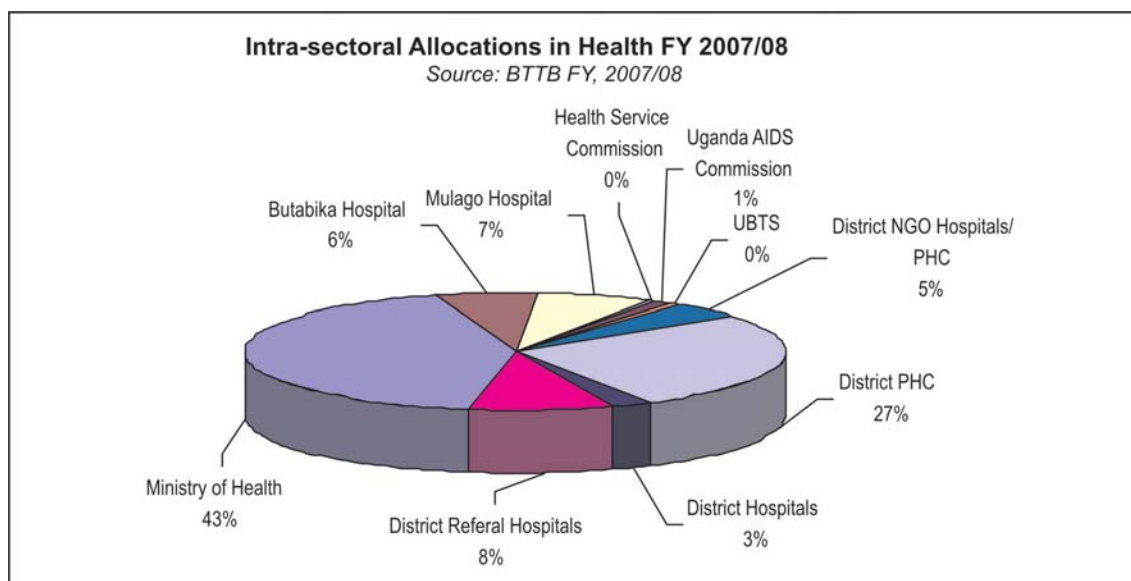
Case Study 2: The National Minimum Health Care Package

In the health sector, efforts to increase access to health services saw the abolition of user fees for health services. While this was a noble objective, the impact on the ground remains far from what was intended, and vulnerable groups still face a challenge of accessing basic health care services. According to the UNHS 2005/6, 13% of sick people suffer without seeking medical attention (UNHS, UBoS 2005/6). The national household survey further revealed that about 1.4 million who fell sick did not seek medical attention, out of which 32% (nearly 450,000 people) cited costs as a hindrance to seeking medical attention. PWDs access to health services is particularly limited by the challenge of long distances to health centres. In addition due to poor enforcement on the requirements for health centres to build ramps and other mechanisms to ensure accessibility by PWDs, most health centres still do not have these accessibility mechanisms for PWDs (NUDIPU 2008). Similarly, people with sight or hearing impairments miss out on the services either on account of medical personnel's inability to communicate with them (for example in sign language) or due to poor access to the services themselves. It is also worth noting that the Comprehensive Minimum Health Care Package is only available at functional Health Centre IVs and in hospitals. This limits access by the general citizenry to access health services, a problem further compounded by the fact that hard to reach areas do not attract health personnel. Also, at village level in many communities, village health teams are

non-functional thus limiting access to health services.

Further analysis reveals that there is over concentration of funding at the centre rather than Local Governments which provide the services under the decentralization of health services. For instance, over 57% of the sector budget for FY 2007/08 is allocated for centre programs and only 43% for Local Governments (see figure below). With meager resources local Government increasingly find it difficult to provide reasonable healthcare to the citizens-contradicting the motive of decentralization of bringing services closer to the people.

Figure: Intra-sectoral Allocations in the Health Sector



Case study 3: The Pension Scheme

Uganda has two existing systems of pensions including; Public Pension Scheme managed by the Pensions Department of the Ministry of Public Service and the Private Social Security System managed by the National Social Security Fund (NSSF). Both pension schemes only apply to workers in the formal sector employment and are silent about the private/self employed and informal sector which accounts for the bulk of the population. According to the UNHS 2005/6, only about 4.8 % are employed in the formal sector, with about 95% employed in the private/self employed and informal sector. In addition, almost 70% of Uganda's working population is self employed in agriculture¹¹. Statistics from the same survey further revealed that Persons working in elementary occupations were the least paid, earning about (Shs.24, 000) per month followed by those in agriculture (Shs.27, 000).

¹¹ Ibid

Table 3; Employment status of working population 14-64 years (%)

Employment Status	2002/3	2005/6
Self employment in agriculture	62.6	69.7
Self employment in non-agriculture	22.3	13.4
Permanent employee	4.8	4.6
Temporary Employee	10.3	11.6
Not stated	-	0.5
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: UBoS UNHS 2005/6

While agriculture is the biggest employer, it should be noted that:

- i) Government's intention of shifting from subsistence to market oriented production through the Plan for Modernization of Agriculture (PMA) can be a high risk endeavor for asset-poor farmers, especially those who are labour constrained and have a low bargaining power.
- ii) 70 % of all that depend on agriculture for a livelihood are subsistence small holder farmers who use family labour, have difficulties accessing credit, information and technology. They are farmers who are vulnerable to price fluctuations, adverse weather and yield fluctuations; the exploitative practices of middlemen, traders; and to food insecurity. The enumerated factors hit the subsistence farmer most as they cause uncertainty and loss, pushing them further into poverty. The 70% in dire need of advisory services to improve technology and production cannot afford procuring advisory services under a market and private oriented arrangement, in addition to having difficulties in accessing rural credit. This implies that these farmers will never be in position to improve productivity or incomes essential for them to be able to meet their basic needs and support production as well, hence they need special measures.
- iii) Market access for vulnerable groups: people in agriculture are groups that are affected most by non economic vulnerabilities like physical disability as well as gender and location vulnerabilities. These are the most likely net consumers of agricultural products and yet they are most negatively affected by price liberalization.
- iv) Gender inequalities in land access and control: without secure rights to land, women's ability and incentive to participate in income enhancing economic activities is reduced.
- v) Changing weather patterns affect the agricultural sector negatively.

Recent studies by Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Program (CAADP) have projected that, if Uganda maintained a 6% annual growth in the agricultural sector, the proportion of people below the poverty line would be about 18% by 2015, which is even far below the MDG target of 28 percent (CSBAG, 2008)

4.3. Resource Allocation and Poverty Eradication

Although national resource allocation shows some degree of poverty sensitivity in sectoral allocations, over the years, there has been a considerable mismatch between poverty eradication priorities as identified in the PEAP and the national budget. For example, the PEAP recognizes agriculture as key sector for poverty reduction in Uganda; however, the national budget does not reflect this stance. The agricultural funding is not commensurate with the contribution of the sector to economic growth, employment and poverty reduction. Spending on direct poverty reducing sectors (education, health, water, roads, and agriculture) has continued to decline from 55% of the total budget in 2000/01 to 50% in 2007/08. On the other hand, spending on other sectors has continued to increase from 45% in 2000/01 to 50% in 2007/08, with public administration and public sector management being the biggest contributor. For example, the health sector requires more than double the current spending in order to realize the minimum health care package (MHCP) of \$ 28 per capita (currently government provides only US \$ 9) (CSGAG¹² 2008).

Figure 1: Trends in Sectoral Budget Allocations (1998/99-2007/08)

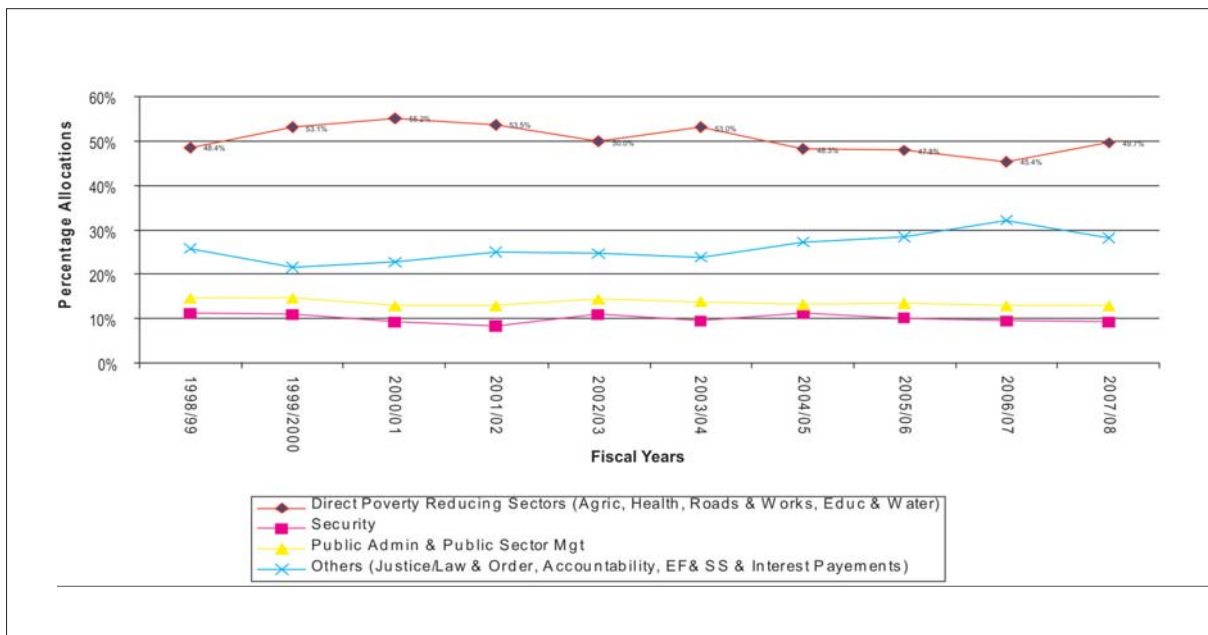


Table: MTEF Allocations (%ge) - excluding arrears & non VAT taxes and Donor Project

Sector/ Vote	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Security	12.3%	11.8%	11.8%	10.7%
Works and Transport	5.8%	7.2%	7.0%	9.4%
Agriculture	3.0%	3.1%	3.5%	5.1%
Education	22.3%	21.3%	21.6%	20.3%
Health	7.9%	7.5%	8.0%	10.8%
Water and Environment	2.3%	2.8%	3.2%	3.2%
Justice, Law & Order	6.2%	5.7%	6.5%	5.7%
Accountability	2.9%	3.7%	3.8%	3.5%
EF & SS	11.6%	11.5%	11.4%	10.6%
Public Sector Mgt	7.7%	7.4%	7.4%	7.5%
Public Administration	9.8%	9.0%	7.3%	6.7%
Interest Payments	8.3%	8.9%	8.7%	6.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: BTTB 2007/08 & CSBAG 2008

EXPECTED BENEFITS OF IMPLEMENTING SOCIAL PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS

There are many potential benefits in adopting social protection approaches to Uganda's development strategy. In the following chapter, we highlight those which have not been listed already, and stress those which have been identified.

Social Protection Promotes Growth:

Social insurance and social assistance can have a positive impact on growth as they lead to increased incomes, stimulate demand for local goods and boost local trade and commerce. In addition, these social protection instruments enable development of larger internal markets through increased incomes, accumulation of human capital and creation of stable social political environments thus leading to and sustaining economic growth. Economic growth will not only generate incomes but will translate into and enable redistribution of incomes and resources to the poor which in turn makes social protection self sustaining.

Enhancement of Human Development:

Provision of Social protection reduces deprivation and promotes greater chances of individual development promoting equal opportunities amongst all population groups especially given the fact that social protection mechanisms can target particular categories of the poorest such as women, persons with disabilities, widows, the elderly, People Living With AIDS among others thereby addressing their inequality needs thus supporting their greater engagement in economic activities. Similarly, SP programmes reduce social exclusion especially when beneficiaries cease to be perceived as a burden on their extended families or communities.

Reduces vulnerability:

Implementation of Social Protection policies and programmes reduces but also mitigates the structural forms of vulnerability mainly through people's exposure to skills and ways of coping with all types of risk. This reduces the impact of shocks which also strengthens economic and social capacity of vulnerable groups to respond to shocks. In addition, it changes people's attitudes by transforming the risk-taking behaviour of the poor, giving them greater confidence to invest in higher-return activities thus improving their livelihoods.

Improves access to social services:

Social protection leads to improved access to social services such as health and education among poor individuals, households and groups. Despite efforts to ensure that every child of school going age attends primary school, the net enrolment rate for children 6-12 years was 74% for the poorest 10% which is

below the national average of 85% while the net secondary enrolment rate was 1.1% compared to the national average of 12.2% (MGLSD 2007). Overall, most children in Uganda drop out of school due to non-tuition cost such as purchasing school uniforms, reading materials and lack of meals among other factors. Provision of social protection through cash transfers for example would increase incomes of children and others groups targeted which translates into their ability to finance non-tuition costs for their children and thus increase access to education. In addition, other interventions such as school feeding programs can enhance enrolment, attendance and concentration thus addressing the high drop out rates-one of the major threats to the realisation of the objectives of UPE.

In health, while ill-health increased from 29.9% in 2002/03 to 40.4% in 2005/06 with higher percentages reported among the poorer households and the elderly, with the incidence of seeking treatment at 77.3% compared with the national average of 87.5% and not seeking treatment attributed to cost among other factors (Ssewanyana 2007), provision of social protection can impede continuation of this trend leading to more prosperous life opportunities and increase access services.

Facilitates investment in assets:

Once implemented, social protection will facilitate investment in human, financial, physical and social assets that can increase returns to economic activity and reduce the risk of future poverty. Research evidence on current interventions suggests that social protection interventions such as the vouchers-for-inputs scheme, implemented in West Nile with the support of the Danida-funded agricultural support programme, and the Community-led HIV/AIDS Initiative (CHAI), which was implemented with funding from the World Bank Multi-Country HIV/AIDS Program (MAP) for Africa, leads to asset accumulation, with income-enhancing effects.

Social protection protects assets:

Social protection policies can enable protection of people's assets especially through social equity provisions where protection against social risks such as discrimination or abuse is ensured. Examples of this can be land policies, inheritance and property rights which enable the poor and vulnerable protect their assets.

Social protection helps deal with market failures:

Market failures are partly responsible for the levels of risk and vulnerability faced by Uganda's poor. The absence of insurance markets and the failure of banking services to reach poor people mean that the poor have less opportunity to save for their own protection, and have no access to formal insurance against shocks. Such failures tend to account for a substantial proportion of persistent low rates of economic growth. Dealing with the causes of such market failures (high transactions costs, asymmetric information) will require among other things, institutional development and financial sector reforms combined with spreading microfinance institutions to the greatest extent possible. It is anticipated that social protection can compliment savings and insurance opportunities, particularly for the poor, which will enable them to become more productive, but will also help correct market failures. In addition, introduction of social protection measures can play a role in tightening wage labour markets, preventing child labour, and reducing discrimination.

SP enhances social cohesion:

Social protection initiatives such as social assistance and social equity enhance social cohesion among community members which further facilitates positive social and economic change and reduces the likelihood of conflict in communities.

Infrastructure development:

Implementation of social protection initiatives such as promotion of public works contributes to development of infrastructure and its associated benefits including improved access to markets. Access to markets increases people's incomes while at the same increasing production especially of agricultural output which further increases the share of agriculture's contribution to GDP and therefore growth.

Increased psycho-social support:

Implementation of Social Protection interventions targeting specific categories of people such as the People Living with HIV/AIDS and Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) lead to improved psycho social support.

CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING SOCIAL PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS;

6.1. Legal and Institutional Framework

While the PEAP, Uganda's planning framework for Poverty Eradication clearly recognizes Social Protection as a cross cutting issue to help address risk and vulnerability and to prevent the poor and vulnerable from sinking into deeper poverty (PEAP, MFPED 2004), there is no comprehensive policy framework to guide the implementation of social protection programs in Uganda. Interventions are on the contrary spread across ministries and coordinating their implementation and monitoring and evaluation of their impact to national development has been a challenge. In addition, policies and laws on social protection are scattered into pieces of legislation and as a result, even their existence is not known among some major stakeholders. There is therefore a need to compile the laws and policies into one compendium for easy implementation and awareness creation on their existence.

At the institutional level, social protection work for OVCs is coordinated under the MGLSD. However, this ministry is one of the most poorly resourced and facilitated ministries. In addition, most of the funds allocated are spent on paying wages and salaries for the ministry staff thus leaving little resources to implement and coordinate the implementation of social protection programs. This creates institutional challenges and shortfalls in being able to ably coordinate the implementation of social protection programs.

In addition to capacity constraints, there are mistrusts about program implementation among institutions such as the local government and CSO's due to corruption, elite capture and poor service delivery among other factors which means that coordination among ministries has often been done with a lot of skepticism and suspicion.

6.2. Financing Social Protection

In arguing for Uganda to raise her social protection spending levels, the first question which will emerge is "affordability". Raising expenditure levels on social protection financed from domestic sources would involve redirecting funds from other areas of expenditure or improving revenue raising capacity. For low-income countries with under-performing economies, these are difficult to achieve. A question might be posed: Is the Uganda government spending enough on social protection? Is there adequate political support for extending social protection in the country?

In the absence of guidance on what would be an optimal level of expenditure on social protection, it is difficult to give a straight answer to this question. However, government expenditure on Universal Primary Education, Primary Health Care, and on Pensions, for example, is already considerable. Similarly, there are other expenditures on social protection in the country, including for example the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund, NGO funding of micro-finance activities, MFPED funding of “Bonna bagaggawale”, private sector financing, community, and NGO financing; as well as household and individual savings.

Agreeing that social protection provides an effective framework for addressing rising poverty and vulnerability in the Ugandan economy, it is therefore prudent that no efforts are spared to support social protection interventions from public, private, voluntary organisations and informal networks, to support communities, households and individuals, in their efforts to prevent, manage, and overcome a defined set of risks and vulnerabilities. A coordinated effort towards financing would, consequently, be an important first step.

Uganda can also support social protection through macroeconomic policy, public expenditure, tax policy, and regulation. As we have already pointed out, there are significant gains to be made from the coordination of macroeconomic policy and social protection. On one hand, macroeconomic policies that ensure sustainable growth and fiscal stability are important in reducing vulnerability and in securing the resources needed for social protection. On the other hand, effective social protection can also help achieve macroeconomic goals by contributing to an adaptable economy, capable of taking advantage of the opportunities from global economic growth and development. As such, macroeconomic policy should aim to prevent crises and mitigate the impacts of these on the poor and vulnerable. Consequently, there is a need to develop capacity for a fiscal policy that is able to mitigate the impact of external shocks. Within public expenditure, social protection should be consistent with strengthening “automatic stabilisers”, such as targeted human development programmes, and other transfers to the poor and vulnerable.

Similarly, public expenditures on basic and social services should be directed towards social protection. As already pointed out, for Uganda, this expenditure in the past included that on early childhood interventions, nutrition programmes, and currently includes primary education and primary healthcare.

Tax policy can support social protection through the revenue collection that finances public expenditure on social protection, but also can support social protection directly through tax expenditures, for example through tax exemptions applied to private and social insurance contributions. There is as yet no evidence of the latter happening in the country.

Further, there may be scope for shifting expenditure from other areas towards social protection, although there will undoubtedly be practical obstacles to this shift. Besides, it is also notable that different types of financing might be more suited to supporting particular types of social protection instruments. Indeed the types of social protection interventions which will be adopted will to an extent determine the funding which is secured, and may range from large-scale and long-term development of integrated social protection systems to self-standing medium-term sectoral programmes (such as the health insurance option).

Regrettably, although government has undertaken a number of comprehensive and broad based tax reforms, they have not achieved increased revenue to GDP ratio and have not widened the tax base

creating the lowest revenue in Sub-Saharan Africa, despite ranking among the best performing economies, as measured by GDP growth. The growth in domestic revenue has hardly kept pace with the growth of the economy especially the growing expenditure demands. In 2005/06, while the share of revenue to GDP was 13.7 percent, the share of total government expenditure to GDP was 22 percent (CSBAG 2008). With such a small revenue base, and such a large poverty problem, the fiscal resources available for implementing social protection are extremely limited, while the need for redistribution is extremely high. This clearly indicates that, a high proportion of spending on social protection programmes will need to be externally financed, rather than funded out of direct contributions (self-financed insurance and pensions) or government revenues. This poses a major challenge in implementation of social protection programmes especially given the current budgetary deficits and shortfalls including the ones in the current social protection schemes such as the pension. This is further exacerbated by the decreasing share of the proportion of national budget allocated to poverty eradication sectors (health, education, agriculture) in favour of administrative/security related expenditure. For example the share of allocation to poverty eradication sectors on the national budget has been declining from 55% in 2000/2001 to 50% in 2007/8 while expenditure in public administration and security increased from 45% in 2000/1 to 50% in 2007/8 (CSBAG 2008).

6.3. Political commitment and acceptability

High skepticism among some professionals on the contribution of social protection to growth and poverty eradication hinders acceptability. Skepticism has been at two levels; the first being that implementation of social protection only undermines social capital as it is likely to crowd out informal safety nets. Proponents of this view argue that there is no need to extend formal safety nets to categories of Ugandans who are adequately protected by informal social support systems. The second level of skepticism is that social protection interventions are ‘welfare handouts’ or ‘charity’ that consume scarce public resources and generates no real economic returns compared to economic growth which is seen as a prerequisite for generating income that will either accrue directly to the poor (‘pro-poor growth’) or can be redistributed to the poor afterwards (a ‘growth first, then redistribution’ strategy). They further argue that social protection only creates dependency as opposed to moving people out of poverty. This coupled with politicization of programs meant for the poor threatens commitment and acceptability of social protection

6.4. Targeting

This is yet a major challenge in implementing social protection programmes, and is mostly attributed to the high levels of poverty and vulnerability in Uganda (with 26% of the population-about 7 million people living in chronic poverty). Given the high levels of poverty and vulnerability, very many people are likely to emerge as qualifying potential beneficiaries posing a major challenge to availability of funds to cater for all the qualifying beneficiaries thus creating complications in the selection processes but also increasing implementation costs.

A related danger is *homogenization* of vulnerable groups. It is important not to assume that all orphans, or IDPs or PLWA have the same needs. For example the category of “orphans” should be disaggregated and “segmented” into several sub-categories-orphans with one parent and those with none; orphans in foster homes, in institutions and or on the street, orphans in urban areas, rural areas and conflict zones

among others. Ideally, distinct programs should be designed to meet the specific needs of each sub-category, though in practice this is very difficult to achieve.

6.5. Sustainability

Given Uganda's dependency on donor funds, it is clearly evident that a significant proportion of social protection activities in Uganda will be financed by the donors, at least for the foreseeable future. The danger is that effective social protection requires constant refinancing, whereas donors operate on project cycles that are time-bound and subject to changes depending on emerging developments at national and international levels thus posing a challenge in sustainability of social protection. Dependency on donor funding is likely to reduce the chances of ownership of the project thereby affecting sustainability. Similarly, with dependency on donor funding, key decisions in implemented mechanisms will be determined by donors leading to lack of ownership at the national and local levels.

6.6. NGO Registration Law

Government in 2007 passed an NGO Registration Law that requires all NGOs and CBOs to register with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and be subject to annual renewal of their licenses if their work does not contradict government plans and work. While positively this law can facilitate coordination of NGOs and CBOs activities especially in service delivery and avoid duplication, there is a concern that this might be a move by the government to monitor, control and restrict the work of NGOs and CBOs involved in implementing programs that exceeds their mandate and engages in programs that the government considers to be "political" or even human rights issues for which social protection is.

WHAT ROLES HAVE UGANDAN CSOs PLAYED TO-DATE?

WHAT ELSE CAN THEY DO?

7.1. Current CSO efforts in social protection

In this short publication it is not possible to catalogue all efforts which Ugandan CSOs have made in the area of social protection. Instead we attempt to give broad highlights of what CSOs have been able to achieve and some of the challenges which they have faced.

Countless CSO efforts in Uganda befit the description of social protection-oriented endeavours. For example, The AIDS Support Organisation (TASO) has for several years directly assisted people living with HIV/AIDS while at the same time contributing to policy and practice in how to handle the HIV/AIDS challenge. FOWODE has, likewise, been advocating for gender mainstreaming and has more recently been focusing on budget advocacy issues. On the other hand, a number of NGOs, including Oxfam, Gulu NGO Forum and others working under the umbrella of Civil Society Organisations for Peace in Northern Uganda (CSOPNU), basing on field-based research and on their extensive knowledge of the humanitarian situation in Northern Uganda contributed considerably to the design of Uganda's policy on Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

Similarly, a few NGOs have been involved in innovative work whose contribution to policy and programme design remains significant. A case in point is work which has been undertaken over the years by Literacy and Adult Basic Education (LABE) which has informed National Adult Literacy Policy. Similarly Gulu Support Children's Organisation (GUSCO)'s work of educating the army on child rights has also informed child-focused policy. Other CSOs have contributed to research and documentation, although a lot more still needs to be done in this area. In particular, CSOs can engage in action research and documentation of social protection interventions and processes to provide evidence and statistics to support the social protection cause, but also to provide evidence on success stories as well as lessons that can be drawn from elsewhere to enable improvement of Uganda's social protection agenda.

However, the NGOs making these great contributions, though identified as responding to a key identified CSO role, have in the past tended to run out of steam with the efforts. As a consequence many such CSOs become confined to the roles of "taskforces" or "steering committees," which roles are insufficient for them to achieve the more strategic desired outcomes.

Cases have also been cited where participation in policy spaces “by invitation” has been misused by senior public servants working on behalf of the state, and this has seriously constrained the participation of CSOs in engaging fully and more fruitfully in the more analytical social protection discussions. In their study on the involvement of civil society in policy dialogue and advocacy, for example, Lister and Nyamugasira observed that representatives of the labour unions have consistently and systematically (though subtly) been sidelined from participating in the PEAP process, not so much because they had no views to offer, but because the views of their representatives on critical reforms such as on privatization, civil service reform (including retrenchment), labour flexibilization, collective bargaining, and minimum wage issues were “considered incompatible with the very essence of the very reforms government was pursuing with tacit support of the Bretton Woods Institutions (Lister and Nyamugasira, 2001).

7.2. What else can Ugandan CSOs do?

Defining and moving the agenda:

Ugandan and Uganda-based Civil society Organisations have a critical role to play in ensuring that the Social Protection agenda is not only defined, adopted and fully integrated into mainstream development programmes, but also that it is effectively managed and sustained. The CSOs have proximity to ordinary citizens and their skills for social analysis and mobilization are highly developed. Not surprisingly, therefore, they can act as a bridge between citizens and government. They also enable people to get together for common purposes and, sometimes in ways that are more creative and focused on the people’s needs than anything government can produce (Wolfowitz, 2005).

On the continuum of social protection policy - conceptualization, through design to implementation and review, CSOs play the roles of representation, advocacy and technical inputs, capacity-building, service delivery, and social functions. In the policy arena itself, CSOs have a role to play in agenda-setting, creating awareness and helping with the prioritisation of key social protection issues; policy-formulation, helping to analytically determine options and strategies which should be adopted; and, contributing to decision-making by proposing ways in which decisions are made about alternatives. Likewise they could play an important role in policy-implementation as well as policy evaluation.

Monitoring through collaboration:

By playing the role of monitors, CSOs are an important way of holding the government accountable, and they also play the key function of keeping policy honest and relevant to the people for whom such policy is made. This function is best exercised through collaboration and coordination of efforts. Here, CSOs can more specifically work with government to monitor the quality and relevance of implementation of programs and ensure that interventions reach the intended beneficiaries. This may either be handled through direct monitoring of service delivery or by facilitating information exchange.

Awareness and advocacy:

As advocates, CSOs should also continuously lobby directly for a range of policy options which help respond to the diverse social protection needs of populations (and at the different levels of administration). Similarly, as already described in the foregoing sections of this discussion paper, CSOs can work as innovators – helping to develop and demonstrate ways of doing things differently, ensuring that engagement is not only done at all levels but that social protection is continuously linked to the different

development sectors such as health, education and agriculture and also to growth. In addition to advocacy, greater awareness about social protection should also be created at all levels including international, national and local levels. This can be done through dissemination of documented social protection materials to different stake holders including policy makers, other NGO's, the donor community and the general public to generate a clear understanding of the issues, options and opportunities for addressing them.

Service delivery:

On the other hand, as service providers many CSOs can directly act to fulfil specific social protection needs (a function they could exercise in combination with either the innovation, monitoring, capacity-building and advocacy functions). While it may be argued that this is the responsibility of the Uganda Government (to provide for its citizens), CSOs can play a complementary role (and are already doing so) through implementation of projects that target the poor and vulnerable to enable them meet their needs such as access to social services and prevent them from falling into deeper poverty. Through service delivery, such CSO's reduce community wide vulnerabilities by reinforcing a safety net system that serves as an insurance function for vulnerable communities and households.

Capacity building:

Finally, as capacity-builders CSOs should be able to provide support to communities or other CSOs aimed at better implementation of social protection. In summary, CSOs in Uganda have a vital role to play in inspiring the course of the debate on social protection; informing key policy makers through their representative role; and making improvements to what is currently on offer through innovation, capacity building and sensitive policy design.

7.3 What lessons do we draw from other African countries?

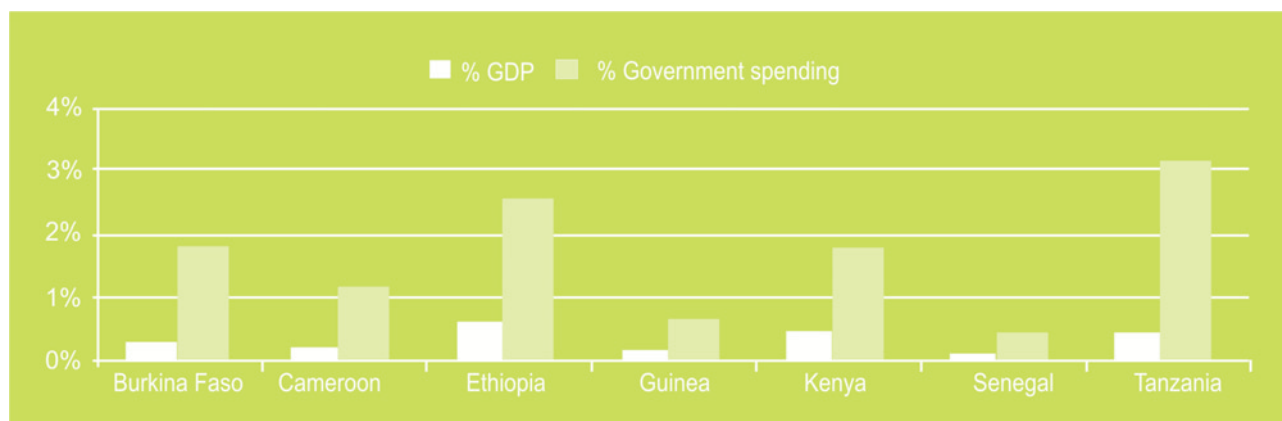
Affordability:

Social protection is affordable in low income countries: A study carried out on affordability of social protection in seven countries,¹² examining three options¹³ revealed that affordability was possible when governments demonstrate political will and donors support their strategies (Samson, MacQuene, and Niekerk 2006). In all the study countries, the cost of the social protection programme targeted to the poorest 10% of the population was below 1% of national income. Similarly, in all countries with the exception of Tanzania, the cost was below 3% of the current government expenditure. The study further showed that the national capacity to finance the programme would grow over time which would enable the countries eventually reduce their reliance on external funding. This evidence supports the position that social protection is not only desirable, effective and affordable but also feasible when there is a convergence of political will, strategy and decision making.

¹² Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Senegal and Guinea,

¹³ The options were including universal social pension for older people and those with disabilities set at a level of US \$ 50 per day (based on the purchasing power parity), a universal children's allowance and a social transfer to the poorest 10% of the population.

Figure Cost of national social transfer programme (equivalent of US \$ 0.50 per day to poorest 10%)



Source : Pal et al (2005), DFID (2006a)

Relevance of social protection Instruments: For social protection instruments to be successful, they need to be relevant to the context in which particular categories of vulnerable people live. In Malawi for example, Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) implemented a public works programme to link one of its remote areas to the sea which would translate into increased incomes for those who would work in the scheme. It was also envisaged that the road would create increased access to markets which in itself would boost local production and consumption. However, the scheme was implemented in a village predominantly occupied by widows and the elderly affected by the scourge of HIV/AIDS. Although there was need for the road, the community was labour constrained which yielded negative results (Samson, MacQuene and Niekerk 2006).

The lesson learnt is that design of appropriate social protection interventions need not be homogeneous in nature but designed in accordance to the net contribution of the intervention vis-à-vis the characteristics of the targeted beneficiaries.

Appropriate mix of social protection instruments: An appropriate mix of social protection instruments is necessary to be able to respond to the varied needs of different vulnerable categories of the population. This is important to enable all needy people benefit from available social protection support.

CONCLUDING NOTE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1. Mainstreaming the social protection agenda

Risk and vulnerability are pervasive and are to be found in nearly all sectors of Government: education, health, agriculture, local government; justice, environment, etc. It is reasonable to argue, therefore, that social protection should be mainstreamed across all the sectors. This argument is given even more credence when one considers the otherwise substantial nature of institutional constraints of providing social protection through the public sector and the likely expense of developing new administrative structures. It is, for example, better to include people facing particular shocks (such as HIV/AIDS) as beneficiaries of social protection in general, rather than narrowly targeting them.

Recommendation/s:

Spread actions to respond to vulnerability across a range of policy sectors where there is a strong possibility of reasonable implementation. As a start, there should be more active inclusion of vulnerability as a consideration in macroeconomic, social sector and other policy areas (e.g. education, health and agriculture).

In the social sector, free services, fee waivers, and conditional transfers should be seriously considered. In the meantime there should be continued provision of safety nets to people as and when hazards occur, and adequate funding should be made available to respond to these hazards when they occur.

8.2. Political commitment and the ability of the poor to lay claims

The vast majority of poor people in Uganda have no access to formal social protection mechanisms and formal safety nets. While there is growing recognition of the need for this situation to be reversed, there are a number of challenges which must first be overcome. A fundamental challenge still remains in the inability of poor and vulnerable people to make claims on the Uganda Government with regard to social protection on one hand, and the failure (or again inability) of employers to deliver social protection to those they employ, which is made worse by weak capacities of governments and employers to meet their obligations. Poor and vulnerable people often lack a voice, and policy priorities and implementation processes do not necessarily always represent their interests. The question that we need to ask at this stage is: what can be done about this situation?

It is also noteworthy that there are strong competing demands on government spending allocations, and social protection programmes inevitably receive lower priority than spending on ‘development’ programmes for economic growth. Part of the problem is that social protection is regarded as ‘welfare handouts’ or ‘charity’ that consumes scarce public resources and generates no real economic returns. Economic growth is also seen as a prerequisite for generating income that will either accrue directly to the poor (‘pro-poor growth’) or can be redistributed to the poor afterwards (the ‘growth first, then redistribution later’ strategy). However, Uganda is committed to ‘growth with equity’, and the Government has steadily increased its allocation of public expenditure towards the social sectors in recent years. It has also been demonstrated in the foregoing discussion that social protection itself stimulates economic growth.

Thus, if (and when) CSOs root their arguments in both a rights and economic foundation, they can simultaneously play a role in empowering the poor and vulnerable to make claims on relevant authorities while at the same time promoting economic development through sound social protection policies and approaches. It is already recognized that in addition to the existing state programmes, NGOs and community-based institutions in the country provide care for sick adults and orphaned children, help identify “new poor” and vulnerable groups, assist in monitoring program impacts, and play a central role in setting up early-warning and rapid response systems relating to shocks. They do a host of other things.

Recommendation:

Strong political leadership is required at the highest political level (including the national Parliament, the Presidency and the Cabinet). Political leaders should in particular be encouraged to play a greater role in developing the policy constituency for social protection and legitimating its policy discourse. For this to pay dividends, other actors will need to be brought on board as well, in particular professionals in academia, the private and CSO sectors.

- Social protection ought to be underpinned by the rights agenda as it is enshrined in the Uganda Constitution, and is backed up by a range of international human rights instruments, including the Universal declaration of Human Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to which Uganda is a signatory which “charges the state to endeavor to fulfill the fundamental rights of all Ugandans to social justice and economic development and shall, in particular, (XIV (b)) ensure that all Ugandans enjoy rights and opportunities and access to education, health services, clean and safe water, work, decent shelter, adequate clothing, food security and pension and retirement benefits”. In addition, the Bill of Rights (Chapter 4) of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995, provides for the following entitlements among others; affirmative action for marginalized groups (Article 32), protection of rights of minorities (Article 36), right to education (Article 30).

8.3. Institutionalising social protection:

The institutional home for mobilization, design and implementation of the social protection is without doubt the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD). This Ministry demonstrates

ample interest in, and leadership of, the social protection agenda. It is also actively pursuing the widening of “the political space within which debates and policies concerning chronic poverty emerge” (Hickey, 2003:15). The existence of a specific ministry with the mandate to play ‘the leading role’ in the social development (GoU, 2004) sector and to promote “the rights of vulnerable and poor groups” is an advantage, and should help to push the social protection agenda. However, the ministry is generally considered to be marginal and outside the circle of powerful ministries such as finance, education and health in terms of donor support, and has hitherto received only lukewarm support from advocates of social protection.

Recommendation:

The profile of MGLSD needs to be raised. In the present circumstances, this will require the highest political authority, the Presidency, to cause a change in attitude towards the ministry, and to require that it receives increased financial and technical support. In the meantime the ministry’s current efforts to revitalize its formerly defunct community development function on one hand and to stimulate reforms in the national social security system on the other should be fully supported and even speeded up.

In connection with the role of MGLSD, local governments should be more fully engaged in innovations aimed at improved delivery of social benefits, and generally in implementing the social protection agenda.

8.4. Delivering Social Services

While as already acknowledged large budgetary allocations go to national programmes (such as Universal Primary Education) and sectors/votes (such as Public Administration and Public Sector Management, Security, Health, Agriculture, Education), relatively small allocations go to specific vulnerable groups (e.g. orphans, people with disabilities, marginalised communities, etc), even though these constitute a large proportion of the population.

Recommendation/s:

Efforts should be made to extend access to social services by subsidizing costs (or giving subsidies to different categories of vulnerable populations, such as people with disabilities, internally displaced persons, marginalized ethnic minorities, orphans, etc). Following the introduction of Universal Secondary Education, also, greater emphasis should be placed on “Universal Vocational Training’ as this tends to be more relevant and useful to children from vulnerable categories of the population. In addition, efforts should be made to address the non-educational needs of disadvantaged children.

8.5. Financing social protection

Currently, the Uganda Government allocates very little public expenditure to social protection or to broader social security benefits. While the ambition of extending some form of social protection to all poor, vulnerable and marginalised categories of the population should remain an ideal, this is challenged by financing, political commitment, sustainability, administrative capacity, and targeting the vulnerable.

Given that the country has a small revenue base, and a large poverty problem, the fiscal resources available for redistribution to the poor are extremely limited, the need for redistribution notwithstanding.

Recommendation/s:

A high proportion of initial spending on social protection programmes will need to be co-financed or externally financed, rather than being funded out of direct contributions (self-financed insurance and pensions) or government revenues. In addition, efforts should be made to identify and boost financing of intra-sector social protection components, and to establish a mechanism for coordination and “communication” between the components in the different sectors.

8.6. Sustainability

As already discussed, the fiscal space for a large commitment to a sustained social protection programme is very limited. The opportunities for expenditure switching are also limited. Opening a fiscal space for poverty reduction will in the medium to long term require a combination of sustained growth and urgent improvements in the effectiveness of tax collection, especially given that the gains in welfare terms from a significant improvement in the human development of the poorest justify this course of action.

Recommendation/s:

Realistically, a significant proportion of social protection activities in Uganda will in the near-term need to be largely financed by the donors. Because effective social protection requires constant refinancing, and donors tend to operate on time-bound project cycles, there will consequently be a need to fully mainstream social protection into national planning and budgeting processes. The changing trends in financing by some donors, from project to budget support, should in this case make future budgetary allocations to social protection more sustainable than a series of uncoordinated externally-funded projects.

In order to further enhance sustainability of the social protection agenda, efforts should also be made to incorporate traditional and informal social protection mechanisms into the mainstream social protection strategy. Similarly, new social protection initiatives should take into account the cultural context, and programmes should not substitute existing solidarity mechanisms but build on them. Likewise, opportunities should be explored for capitalising on the spirit of social responsibility which is present in most communities.

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