

 FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG Kampala Office	<i>Briefing</i>
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August 2012	www.fes-uganda.org

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ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
DIS	Direct Income Support
DRT	Development Research and Training
ESP	Expansion of Social Protection
ESPP	Expanding Social Protection Programme
FES	Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
ILO	International Labour Organization
KII	Key Informant Interview
MAAIF	Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industries and Fisheries
MFPED	Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development
MGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MLG	Ministry of Local Government
NDP	National Development Plan
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
SAGE	Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment
SCG	Senior Citizens Grant
SP	Social Protection
SPPF	Social Protection Policy Framework
UPE	Universal Primary Education
VFG	Vulnerable Families Grant
WB	World Bank

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Social Protection Floor (SPF) is a nationally defined set of basic social security guarantees derived from human rights treaties, including access to essential services (such as health, education, housing, water and sanitation, and others, as defined nationally) and social transfers, in cash or in kind, to guarantee income security, food security, adequate nutrition and access to essential services. For the case of Uganda, a social protection floor should cover all categories of the population defined as vulnerable. These include very young children, older persons, persons with disabilities, the unemployed youth, as well as those with chronic illness such as HIV & AIDS; taking consideration of issues of gender and ethnic minorities.

The UN Chief Executive Board for Coordination (CEB) supported by its High Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) adopted the Social Protection Floor Initiative (SPFI) as one of its nine joint crisis initiatives to cope with the recent financial and economic crisis. The SPF concept has become widely recognised and accepted at various international, regional and national conferences since 2009 including the G20 and Millennium Development Goals (MDG) summit and was passed as a UN recommendation in June 2012.

Investing in a SPF promotes social justice and economic development. Social security represents an investment in a country's human resource, which is as important as investing in its physical infrastructure. Social protection schemes, therefore, are important tools to reduce poverty and inequality among a country's population. They do not only help individuals and their families to get out of poverty, but also contribute to economic growth and development by raising labour productivity and enhancing social stability. They act as automatic economic stabilisers as seen during the recent global economic meltdown.

Uganda has made some progress towards achieving some of the SP basic guarantees, such as cash transfers given to the elderly and vulnerable households through the Social

Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE) programme under the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD). However, there is still need to enhance and streamline many of these interventions and have them integrated in the country's overall development policies and programmes.

This report provides an analysis of SPF issues generated during consultations with key policy actors and stakeholders. The analysis focuses on their understanding of the SPF initiative in Uganda and its relevance to the on-going policy debate.

INTRODUCTION

The critical discussion for SP in Uganda has centred on affordability (fiscal space) and the assumption that SP has the propensity to create and sustain a "hand out" culture among the population. Secondly, the discussion seems to be much inclined to promotion of pilot (direct income support) cash transfers and less on other instruments of SP that would probably be more attractive to policy makers. It is therefore, important to have discussions and debates on the UN Social Protection Floor Initiative within the Ugandan context to explore possibilities of adopting it as one of the models that can address the current concerns about social protection.

The ILO's approach for the extension of effective social security coverage is as follows:

1. The horizontal dimension that should consist of the rapid implementation of national social protection floors, i.e. minimum package of transfers, rights and entitlements that provide access to essential medical care and sufficient income to all in need of such protection;
2. The vertical dimension that should provide higher levels of social security - at least in line with the coverage and benefit requirements of the ILO's Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention 1952 (No. 102) providing for higher levels of protection.

By way of a staircase, the objective is to aim at achieving higher levels of protection rather than simply focusing on the ground floor level. As economies grow and more fiscal space is created, social protection systems can and should move up the staircase, extending the scope, level and quality of benefits. The services provided should also translate the aim of the horizontal dimension into practice of middle and low income countries like Uganda which face financial constraints. The ILO therefore recommends that such countries should first put in place basic and modest social security guarantees which are:

- ◆ All residents have access to a nationally defined set of essential health care services.
- ◆ All children have income security at the level of the nationally defined poverty line level, through family or child benefits aimed at facilitating nutrition, education and health care.
- ◆ All those in active age groups who are able to earn sufficient income on the labour markets should enjoy a minimum income security through social assistance, social transfer schemes or through employment guarantee schemes.
- ◆ All residents in old age and with disabilities have income security based on the level of the nationally defined poverty line through minimum pensions for old age and disability.

In the case of promoting SP in Uganda this could mean:

- ◆ Enhancing public health care and the removal of user fees.
- ◆ Quality universal primary education (UPE). Taking into account the rising cases of malnutrition and child mortality rates, UPE could be combined with specific measures of basic protection for children.
- ◆ Developing a public works program for the youth.
- ◆ Universalising the current pilot program on Direct Income Support (DIS), as well as the

pension scheme and introduce a grant specifically for disabled persons.

In view of the above, and bearing in mind the ongoing social protection processes in Uganda, a number of questions whose answers could only be acquired through policy consultations arose, these questions are:

1. How is the social protection floor initiative relevant to the current social protection debate and processes in Uganda? How would it fit into the on-going policy debate? How can the UN's social protection floor recommendations be contextualised for Uganda – particularly the discussion on the different minimum guarantees?
2. How and when is it appropriate to introduce the debate and advocacy for the adoption of a social protection floor initiative in Uganda?
3. What is the implication of introducing the social protection floor debate under the current social protection processes in Uganda?

Purpose

Basing on the above questions, the following specific objectives were generated to guide the policy consultation process:

1. To assess the level of understanding of the concept of the social protection floor among policy actors in Uganda; their information needs on the subject and how these can be addressed.
2. To explore ways of broadening the debate on social protection in Uganda to include the SPF initiative.

Methodology and Process

The consultation adopted a qualitative methodology using in-depth, face-to-face, key informant interviews (KII) with policy actors who are knowledgeable about social protection processes, or whose sectors have direct relevance to the social protection debate in Uganda.

The research team carried out a brief review

of existing information on social protection processes in Uganda and international social protection floor experiences. The consultation team held an internal discussion to agree on the objectives of the consultation and the respondents to be contacted.

This was followed by designing the KII question guide, setting interview appointments with various respondents, and conducting the interviews. Data was then sorted and categorised according to the objectives of the consultation, to ensure completeness, quality and consistency. An in-depth analysis was done, followed by writing of the consultation report. Key informants included officials from the following institutions:

- ◆ Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development,
- ◆ Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development,
- ◆ Ministry of Education and Sports,
- ◆ National Organisation of Trade Unions,
- ◆ Federation of Uganda Employers,
- ◆ Uganda National NGO Forum,
- ◆ UNICEF,
- ◆ Office of the Prime Minister,
- ◆ Help Age International (Uganda),
- ◆ Economic Policy Research Centre,
- ◆ Expanding Social Protection Secretariat,
- ◆ Uganda Social Protection Platform,
- ◆ Cross Cultural Foundation Uganda,
- ◆ Department for International Development (DFID/UK Aid),
- ◆ Trocaire.

UNDERSTANDING OF THE SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOOR

There is varied understanding of the concept of social protection among policy actors in Uganda. On the one hand, many connote ongoing social services that are universal in nature (for example, universal primary and secondary education and health for all through the government's primary health care) as social protection. Those who believe this way aver that social protection as a concept is one

and the same as special poverty eradication programmes, for instance, the National Agricultural Advisory Service (NAADS), Youth Venture Capital Fund or microcredit schemes, among others. More still, they do not seem to know or understand anything about the Social Protection Floor Initiative (SPFI) and argue that its adoption would be a duplication of already existing interventions, and is therefore unnecessary.

On the other hand, some policy actors have indirectly or at a limited level interacted with the current debates on social protection, both at national and international levels. These understand social protection as a special package of programmes that need to be given to very poor and vulnerable people who are unable to access and or benefit from the social service delivery system. Those who have this understanding of social protection believe that the SPF ensures basic minimum protection for the very poor and vulnerable to help them improve their lives.

The third category is composed of policy actors who are deeply involved in the current social protection debates and processes in Uganda. They understand what social protection is and can define it as all public and private interventions that address vulnerabilities associated with being or becoming poor as defined in the National Development Plan 2010/11-2014/15. They have heard about the social protection floor, do not necessarily have a good understanding of it, but suggest that it can be looked at from three angles; namely moral, equity, and economic perspectives. They aver that decency is paramount and it is an abuse of human rights if people lived without dignity and died of hunger or other forms of preventable calamities. From the economic point of view, some in this category argue that since Uganda is increasingly becoming a capitalist economy, the state is obliged to take care of those who cannot cope; by redistributing income from the rich to the chronically poor and vulnerable populations.

Policy actors involved in the current social protection processes and those with a little

understanding of the social protection agenda in Uganda have mixed feelings about beginning debates on a social protection floor at this point in time. They caution that before discussing any seemingly new concepts on social protection in Uganda, one should be in position to understand “where Uganda has been and where it is” regarding social protection. They claim that the basics of social protection are not yet fully understood and thus introducing a discussion on a social protection floor will create more confusion at this point in time. To some of the people interviewed, direct income support is the only social protection instrument that they know and are not aware of other instruments that can be adopted.

From the preceding it can be noted that there is lack of an in-depth knowledge of different social protection interventions among key policy actors. Especially the question of universality and the role of the state in providing adequate SP seem not to be sufficiently addressed.

History of Social Protection in Uganda

Social Protection is not a new concept in Uganda. Traditionally, social protection was embedded within the cultural norms as a form of solidarity and assistance to people within clans and communities who were unable to take care of themselves. These normally included orphans and vulnerable children, the widowed, older persons, persons with disabilities, and the terminally ill.

Community and clan norms clearly prescribed how these people should be cared for. In the face of ever-increasing disintegration of traditional and cultural norms as well as the extended family, civil society has been at the forefront of supporting the chronically poor and vulnerable people in the communities through social protection-like interventions. While these traditional social protection interventions have been and continue to be useful, they are scattered, highly uncoordinated and only targeting small pockets of people. Moreover, their actual value addition as effective

social protection interventions has not been documented.

Proponents of the traditional model of social protection argue that through proper coordination and harmonisation of SP with public and numerous civil society interventions, it can provide desirable social protection floors cheaply and effectively. Although strongly grounded in families and communities, the traditional models of SP are currently considered as complimentary services in the ongoing SP discussions.

The Current Social Protection Environment in Uganda

What is being done? Following recommendations of the Chronic Poverty Report DRT, 2005¹, Uganda, through the MGLSD has been involved in social protection debates, both at national and international level. The debates culminated into designing the Expanding Social Protection Program (ESPP). This includes a pilot Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment (SAGE) that targets vulnerable families and the elderly and the drafting of a Social Protection Policy Framework (SPPF).

The National Development Plan (2009) requires the MGLSD to initiate social grant programmes to promote poverty reduction and contribute to national social, economic and human development processes. ESP is a five year pilot social protection program that has two components, namely:

- ♦ The Direct Income Support – which comprises of the senior citizens grant (SCG) and the vulnerable families grant (VFG). This is implemented in 14 districts of Uganda and is expected to reach 95,000 beneficiaries in a five-year period.
- ♦ The development of a social protection policy framework for Uganda – through generation of evidence and testing mechanisms, principles and systems used to implement the SCG and VFG. In the draft so-

¹ *Development Research and Training (2005). Chronic Poverty in Uganda: The Policy Challenges*

cial protection policy for Uganda, the social protection floor has been adopted as a model to achieve the long term vision for social protection. The policy also reflects aspects of the African Union Social Policy Framework.

Alongside implementation of SAGE, there are efforts to generate political and technocratic support for expansion of social protection in Uganda. Dialogues with members of parliament and key decision makers in various sectors are all part of this process.

Relationship between Social Protection in Uganda and the SPF Initiative

Not all key actors in the ongoing social protection processes in Uganda have heard about or are conversant with the SPF initiative. Only a few have this knowledge and it is scanty. This notwithstanding, some of those who have little knowledge about the SPF initiative argue that SP interventions currently being implemented in Uganda provide the appropriate or necessary minimum guarantees that the state can afford at this point in time.

They specifically point out that the SCG of the SAGE program, which provides a basic minimum income of 24,000 Ugandan shilling this financial year, from 23,000 Ugandan shilling last financial year is expected to gradually reach all older persons in 14 districts in the pilot project in 5 years. They suggest that these, in addition to the already existing UPE/USE and health for all policy, are sufficient minimum guarantees.

Other policy actors however, believe that while it is difficult to delink UPE/USE and universal healthcare from social protection, the current universal provisions fall way below the required standards. They argue that these existing provisions cannot be treated as acceptable minimum SP guarantees. They assert that to bring these provisions to the required standard, visible improvements in quality of and access to service delivery need to be made, among other modifications in the

social service sectors. When this is done, those who are still not covered could then be targeted with specially designed (social protection) programmes to enable them access basic minimum guarantees.

Another group suggests additional guarantees that they feel the state should consider as part of the basic minimum. These include mandatory guaranteed school feedings for all primary school students. This would guarantee children at least one meal a day and contribute to health and education outcomes. Some suggested a modification in the way the disability fund which is given to districts, is instituted and managed so that it becomes a universal grant to all persons with disabilities. Other suggestions included providing basic minimum incomes to the unemployed labour force, particularly the youth as well as converting the NAADS programmes into a fully-fledged conditioned cash transfer program in the agricultural sector. Proponents of this argue that this would provide minimum guarantees to those involved in rural subsistence agriculture, where the majority of Ugandans currently work.

Others go further to propose a review of African models that work well and incorporate them in the social protection floor concept for Uganda. They further proposed that it is necessary to revive and strengthen social-democratic tendencies, such as Bulungi Bwansi and Munno Mukabi² that once existed if implementation of a social protection floor in Uganda is to be affordable and sustainable. Work for pay (particularly youth participation in public works) was suggested as another minimum guarantee that the state needs to adopt – as it would not only provide basic incomes for those enrolled, but also contribute to national security and stability.

² *Bulungi Bwansi and Munno Mukabi refer to community based social support systems that were voluntarily provided by members of the community to labour constrained and poverty stricken households. Within this system, everyone was available to support everyone else in their time of vulnerability and need.*

Concerns about discussing the Social Protection Floor Initiative now

As alluded to earlier, there are mixed feelings among the policy actors about the intention to begin discussing the social protection floor initiative and advocating for its adoption in Uganda. Their concerns are summarised below:

Targeting: The social protection floor initiative suggests eventual universal coverage. Some of the policy actors felt that this would require targeting very large populations which would outstretch the resource basket available for social protection provisions.

Dependency: There were fears that social protection breeds dependency, some of the key informants cautioned not to stimulate demand for social protection guarantees that would introduce many attractive packages now. Proponents of this idea opine that SP provisions should be time-bound so that beneficiaries will gradually stop benefiting in order to allow those who have not benefited or are in need to access the service as well. They also had a preference for conditional social protection with beneficiaries monitored strictly in the usage of the grants. They argued that this would create incentives to work and minimise dependency and the development of a cohort of people who are SP beneficiaries in the future.

Institutional capacity: The issue of institutional capacity was raised as an important aspect that should not be overlooked when advocating for the adoption of a social protection floor in Uganda. Suggestions pointed to the preference of a community-owned identification of beneficiaries, as well as the use of existing local government structures and systems as opposed to setting up new structures specially for social protection provisioning. They argue that local government structures would be best suited to channel public resources and would ease communication / feedback channels between beneficiaries and service providers. They acknowledge that this would require building their capacity to manage these processes. There was a sugges-

tion to also have an established authority to spearhead social protection in Uganda

Financing of a Social Protection Floor: The government prioritised social protection in the national development plan 2010/11-2014/15 and committed to a financial and in-kind contribution to the social protection pilot, SAGE, of six billion Ugandan shilling over the NDP period. Already, the government is backtracking on its commitment – in the 2011/12 financial year government pledged 125 million Ugandan shilling. However, in the 2012/13 financial year only 40 million Ugandan shilling were committed out of the expected 500 million Ugandan shilling. The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MFPED) insists that there are no available funds to go around all the sectors, and has placed social protection second on the list of “unfunded priorities”.

Distortion of gains made in understanding and demanding for SP: Policy actors, particularly those at the forefront of advancing the current debate on social protection and the development of a social protection policy, are hesitant to begin discussing the concept of the SPF. According to them, this new information will distort their current message and counter the gains they have made so far, especially among technocrats in the MFPED and politicians. They also argue that the public, not well conversant with the concept of social protection in the first place, will become more confused. They further caution that there is a need to define these concepts and make a clear distinction between social protection, social services and the social protection floor so that people can understand all these and other basic facts on the subject.

BROADENING THE DEBATE OF THE SPF IN UGANDA

This section looks at possible actions that can be undertaken to start and widen the debate of the SPF initiative in Uganda, as well as pointing out possible stakeholders that could be involved and what their value addition to this process could be.

The majority of respondents and indeed most Ugandans who have some understanding of social protection view older persons' pensions and programmes for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) as the only social protection instruments. A few others, particularly in the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) understand many of the Northern Uganda Recovery Programmes as having social protection components.

Broadening the Debate

During the consultation, there were persistent suggestions about the futility of talking about minimum basic incomes as part of a social protection floor so long as the country does not have a minimum wage in place. It was argued that one of the ways of broadening this debate would be to revive the minimum wage campaign and propose putting in place minimum wage legislation. Otherwise, it would become impossible to, for instance, talk about inclusion of the informal sector into the social protection floor provisioning. The role of civil society in broadening this debate cannot be overlooked because it is a key player in advocacy and lobbying as well as sensitizing communities about the need for a universal income security for all citizens.

Secondly, raising awareness of the concept of a social protection floor was viewed as an important step in broadening the social protection debate and stimulating a discussion among numerous people. This would require, among other strategies, extensive use and involvement of national and local media. Many respondents were open to learn more about the social protection floor initiative in order to advocate for a scale up of existing programmes.

Other suggestions included researching and proposing to government other instruments that could be tried by Uganda, which are affordable and probably more sustainable than cash transfers.

Stakeholder Involvement

The consultations also sought to identify

some new stakeholders that could be brought on board and whose contribution to the SPF debate would add value in convincing sections of policy actors. Some of the stakeholders were mentioned as well as their merits and demerits discussed as below:

Youth Organisations: Firstly, the proportion of youth in the Ugandan population is growing alarmingly fast. Uganda has the youngest age structure in the world with 77% of its population below 30 years. The majority of the youth is poor and uneducated or with little education. Among this age group, unemployment and underemployment are high. It is therefore important to engage with youth organisations in order to find viable social protection instruments / guarantees that can best respond to their needs.

Beneficiary groups: These are important in documenting success stories and best practices that can be used to argue for an expansion of SP and an adoption of the social protection floor in Uganda. Additionally, beneficiary groups can be critical in lobbying and advocating for the continuity of social protection. As some of the respondents put it, once in place, it becomes difficult and politically unviable to cease providing social protection. Rather, it is more practical to continue with current beneficiaries and even expand coverage to include others that are being left out.

Traditional / cultural institutions: Working with these institutions could be premised on the clout they hold among their constituencies. As such, they can be a very strong force in demanding for social protection of their poorest and most vulnerable members. In addition, cultural institutions are a rich source of information on some forms of traditional social protection that could be reconsidered and combined together with modern ones for maximum effectiveness.

Trade unions: When organised and politically independent, trade unions can be very strong advocates for social protection. Moreover, they could add new dimensions to a social protection floor debate, demanding for wider and more attractive social protection

packages, combining the need to protect chronically poor and vulnerable citizens as well as workers and the unemployed labour force.

Employers' federations: Their focus is mainly on advocacy for pension benefits for the employed class. They broaden their focus to address income security needs of the informal. They broaden their focus to address income security needs of the informal sector.

Other line ministries that are not usually involved could be brought on board, for instance, the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industries and Fisheries (MAAIF), the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), or the Ministry of Local Government (MLG). Processes and decisions made within these sectors have direct implications for the socio-economic wellbeing of Ugandans. Making them understand the concept, meaning and benefit of providing social protection, ensuring that minimum guarantees are provided to those in need, as well as including them in debates on a social protection floor would help them realize that a social protection floor is contributing positively to their sector outcomes, and thus improves sensitivity of their decision making. Specifically, because over 80% of Ugandans depend on agriculture for their livelihoods, MAAIF needs to think of putting in place social protection minimum guarantees for rural poor farmers. MIA needs to get involved in putting in place standard registration and identification processes as these would be key in the effective delivery of a social protection floor. MLG would be responsible for the implementation of a social protection floor, for feedback and monitoring of public resources at the local government level, where the majority of beneficiaries are found.

Non-Governmental Organisations: Civil society is instrumental in demanding an active government role in providing social protection, monitoring commitments and delivery of social protection packages to the beneficiaries. One such commitment that the government needs to fulfil is to regularly provide counter-funding to the USPP, and expedite the process of developing the SPPF.

Public sector: The public sector needs to be engaged more broadly for them to understand the principles of a SPF and work together with policy makers. Public sector in this case entails all entities that are profit-making and delivering services to the people.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

There is an obvious need to step up public education and awareness about social protection in general and the social protection floor concept in particular, in both the public and private sector. Stakeholder understanding of these concepts will have a great impact on the ease of their adoption by the government and its commitment to sustainably financing a social protection floor in Uganda.

Social Protection Policy Development

The most important thing that stakeholders have to ensure, according to respondents, is putting in place a social protection policy that clearly reflects on and defines the role of a social protection floor. It can be implemented and scaled up over the medium to long term as well as the roles of stakeholders. As such, it was recommended that those working on this social protection floor initiative in Uganda need to find entry points and contribute to the current social protection policy development process being led by the MGLSD. For without this policy not much headway will be realised, especially in terms of commitment to financing social protection floor initiatives.

Public Education

To address information needs on the concept of the social protection floor initiative and to take the debate forward, respondents suggested that as an initial step, concise information on the subject needs to be written covering the following sub-topics:

1. What the concept is – definition and suggested guarantees.

2. Its relationship with and advantages over the current mode of social protection provided.
3. Its relevance to the social protection debate in Uganda.
4. Suggested / alternative minimum guarantees that Uganda could adopt.
5. Suggested sources of financing for an adoption and expansion of a social protection floor.
6. Plausible reasons why this is the way Uganda should go in providing social protection for its people.

This information brief and any other information on the SPF can then be widely and regularly shared with different sectors, targeting both individuals, who are key decision makers in those sectors, and selected staff. Respondents emphasised the need to create awareness not only at the national level but also at the local government level, down to the grassroots. This awareness should then culminate into a sustained bottom up demand for the implementation and expansion of a social protection floor and for government to prioritise social protection floor provisioning on the national agenda.

Site Visits

One of the findings of this consultation pointed to facilitated regular visits of technocrats from various sectors and politicians to different countries where social protection is being implemented successfully (not necessarily using the social protection floor model). On the basis of this knowledge, a cross section of respondents suggested that it is also important for these key decision-makers to have internal visits to some non-state social protection interventions such as those run by humanitarian organisations like World Vision, Save the Children, Child Fund, among others, which have been successful and can provide lessons for replication to the government at a wider scale to provide universal minimum guarantees.

Minimum Wage

A vast majority of respondents alluded to the fact that it would be meaningless to discuss basic minimum incomes for any category of poor and vulnerable communities if there is no benchmark against which to measure what this basic minimum can be. They suggested that a minimum wage should be instituted for Uganda, and therefore proposed a revival of the minimum wage debate and recommended that active advocacy about the issue needs to take place.

Conclusion

The need for special measures to ensure that poor and marginalised people benefit fully from mainstream services is justified from a normative human rights perspective, which has human dignity and equality as fundamental values. It is imperative that governments play an active role in designing, funding and providing adequate social protection measures for their citizens.