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CHAPTER 4. SOCIAL PROTECTION ISSUES IN UGANDA

The study team supports the ambition of extending some form of social protection to all poor, vulnerable and marginalised Ugandans. It is important to acknowledge, though, that this goal faces several fundamental challenges that may prove to be insurmountable, unless serious efforts are taken to circumvent them. These challenges include financing, political commitment, sustainability, administrative capacity, and targeting the vulnerable. This chapter also briefly discusses issues concerning provision of social services in Uganda, the role of NGOs, and the changing significance of informal social security systems.

Delivering Social Services

In budgetary analysis, governments often claim that their spending on social sectors (health and education) is pro-poor and contributes to social protection, but in fact little of this spending is targeted on the poor and almost none of it is problem-driven. Large budgetary allocations go to national programmes (e.g. UPE) and sector Ministries (e.g. Health, Education), but relatively small allocations go to specific vulnerable groups (e.g. orphans, marginalised communities), even though these are not small groups, and their needs are large.

Two examples, concerning people with disabilities (PWD) and orphans:

- *The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development* set up 8 Rehabilitation Centres for Persons With Disabilities, but 3 were destroyed in wars, so now there are just 5. The Ministry has also launched a programme of Community-Based Rehabilitation for PWD, which started in 3 districts in 1996 and has now reached 10 districts. The aim was to cover half the country by now, but further expansion has been curtailed because of financial constraints. These are expensive programmes, but less expensive than institutionalisation, and more effective.

- *UWESO (Uganda Women's Efforts to Support Orphans)* is the only NGO working at national level to support orphans, mostly through a savings and credit project that provides small loans to orphan carers. Despite international support (with funding from the Belgian Survival Fund, IFAD, Danida, UNICEF and USAID), UWESO has limited outreach and coverage, with active programmes in selected sub-counties of only 9 districts. Currently 70,000 families caring for ±100,000 orphans are being reached, out of an estimated 2 million orphans nationally (5% coverage). The constraints to further expansion are both financial and human resources. Also, UWESO does not work in conflict areas of northern Uganda, for security reasons, though the needs there may be greater than anywhere else.

Attempts to extend access to social services to the poor by subsidising costs are important, and two significant initiatives in Uganda are the abolition of health charges and the introduction of Universal Primary Education, first for four children per family, now for all children. But these initiatives have their problems. Firstly, they are very expensive and need to be adequately and sustainably financed. Secondly, a rapid expansion in service provision almost always results in falling service quality, at least for a transitional period, as the additional staffing and materials that are needed to address the surge in demand take time to come on-stream. In the case of abolition of health charges, for instance, there was a period when clinics and health posts faced

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drugs stock-outs. In the case of Universal Primary Education, shortages of trained teachers have resulted in large increases in teacher/learner ratios, and a fall in the average qualifications of primary school teachers. Parents' perception that the quality of schooling is dropping has caused a dramatic rise in private schools in Kampala and elsewhere.

A third problem with 'flagship' programmes like education and health subsidies is that they tend to crowd out spending on smaller, less 'glamorous' programmes that meet specific needs. For example, following the successful introduction of Universal Primary Education, there is now an active debate around the possibility of 'Universal Secondary Education', but people who work with orphans and other disadvantaged children argue that 'Universal Vocational Training' would be more relevant and useful. Moreover, since UPE has absorbed so much public resources, complementary interventions to address the non-educational needs of disadvantaged children have been relatively neglected.

Delivering Social Protection

1. ### <u>Financing</u>

   Uganda's GDP per capita was just $350 in the year 2000, and 22 million Ugandans depend on just 150,000 income taxpayers, which is why Uganda is still among the world's poorest countries. With such a small revenue base, and such a large poverty problem, the fiscal resources available for redistribution to the poor are extremely limited, while the need for redistribution is extremely high. Clearly, 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.

2. ### <u>Political commitment</u>

   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. This is partly because social protection is regarded everywhere as 'welfare handouts' or 'charity' that consumes scarce public resources and generates no real economic returns, and partly because economic growth 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). On the other hand, 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.

3. ### <u>Sustainability</u>

   In reality, 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 in fashion (trends in development thinking mean that 'pet projects' can rapidly become unfashionable) or personnel (staff rotation to other countries leaves no 'champion' promoting the project in the local office).

4. ### <u>Administrative Capacity</u>

   Uganda already faces shortages of trained personnel in key social sectors such as education and health, and these constraints appear to be even more acute in terms of

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social workers and managers of facilities that provide institutionalised care to people such as orphans and abandoned children. More training and more personnel are urgently needed in these areas.

A related issue is the role of local government in delivering or coordinating social protection programmes at district or sub-county level. In theory, decentralisation offers the prospect of a better match between locally articulated needs and centrally provided services. In practice, implementation has been patchy and some districts are achieving more success than others. In Wakiso District, the study team discovered that the LC3 level is monitoring and attempting to coordinate the dozens of NGO and CBO activities in the sub-county, but it has little authority over these activities and almost no authority over spending of centrally allocated funds in the local communities.

5.   <u>Targeting the Vulnerable</u>

There are two dangers in classifying entire groups of people (e.g. 'orphans') as needing social protection. The first is *targeting error.* Any group-based classification provides a proxy for need that will inevitably misclassify some individuals as being 'at risk' or 'in need' when in fact they are neither. For example, not all female-headed households are poor, not all orphans need special care, not all people with disabilities are unable to work and maintain themselves. The cost-effectiveness of any intervention targeted at broad groups depends largely on how robust those groups are as proxies for need.

A related danger is *homogenisation* 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 or 'segmented' into several sub-categories – orphans with one parent and those with none; orphans in foster homes, in institutions, and on the street; orphans in urban areas, rural areas, and conflict zones; orphans in different age-sex cohorts. Ideally, distinct programmes should be designed to meet the specific needs of each sub-category, though in practice this is very difficult to achieve.

Informal Social Protection Providers: NGOs

The Ministry of Internal Affairs is passing an 'NGO Registration Bill', which requires all NGOs and CBOs to register with the Ministry. This has both positive and negative implications. On the positive side, this will facilitate coordination of NGO/CBO activities, especially service delivery activities, to identify gaps and avoid duplication. It should also bring funding that is channelled through NGOs 'on budget' in the context of current trends towards sector programming initiatives.

On the negative side, there is a concern that the Ministry might be intending to monitor, control and restrict the 'activist' activities of NGOs/CBOs that are engaged in campaigning around human rights issues. In other countries, NGOs that were registered as service delivery organisations have lost their licence to operate if they exceed this mandate and engage in campaigns that the government considers to be 'political'.

Informal Social Support Systems

The Poverty Eradication Action Plan defines 'social capital' as the institutional characteristics of a community (both formal and informal) including social relationships and networks, which enable members of the community to pursue their livelihoods, and to reduce or mitigate risks and to cope with uncertainty and micro-level risks" (PEAP, page xi).

Traditionally, social capital has been a vital source of informal social security to the poor, but there are questions as to how effective and resilient they are in contemporary Uganda, given trends in terms of commercialisation, the pressures and demands of HIV/AIDS, and persistent civil conflict and insecurity.

Some people argue that formal safety nets should not be extended to categories of Ugandans who are adequately protected by informal social support systems. According to this view, formal safety nets only undermines social capital and crowds out and informal safety nets, which is inefficient and costly in terms of undermining social capital, replacing self-help with dependency. This is a hypothesis to be tested.

According to an alternative view, informal social support systems in Uganda are under severe strain, and it is not clear that they are adequate for meeting all the needs of the poor and vulnerable. Community support systems have almost disappeared in some areas, with little prospect for their revival. For example, many communities used to have village grain banks, and farming households had granaries, but these have mostly gone now. It is often said that *"morals are changing"* – granaries were stolen, people were forced to store food inside their houses, but this means they store less now. Commercialisation has also reduced incentives to maintain food stores, since people have pressing needs for cash. Cattle rustling also reduced incentives to store wealth in livestock at the extended family or community level – instead, people prefer to keep cash at the individual level, but poverty limits their ability to save. In this context of chronic poverty at the household, community and national levels, the policy dilemma is: how to replace or restore informal safety nets with effective formal or informal social protection mechanisms?

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CHAPTER 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Priority Groups

At a dissemination workshop in Kampala on 25 September, where the draft report for this study was presented and discussed, workshop participants identified four priority groups that have the greatest unmet need for social protection, namely: the elderly, orphans, agricultural and other low-paid workers, and war-affected people. These groups were motivated as follows:

Elderly:

- they have been marginalised for too long;
- they are not prioritised by government and NGOs;
- they face many problems, including caring for PLWAs and orphans;
- their number is significant, at 4.1% of the population;
- they are a burden to the younger population.

Orphans:

- extended families are overstretched;
- social cohesiveness has broken down;
- 1.7 million out of 2.3 million orphans are a result of HIV/AIDS;
- they have enormous unmet needs;
- those who have lost both parents are doubly disadvantaged;
- orphans have high drop-out rates from school;
- many orphans become street children; destitute and in conflict with the law;
- their psychosocial needs are often neglected.

Agricultural workers, low-paid workers, informal sector workers:

- the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment study shows that the situation of agricultural and low-paid workers is pathetic;
- the living conditions of agricultural workers are close to slave labourers;
- they are overworked and work very long hours;
- their needs are not addressed by the PEAP;
- children inherit the poor living standards of their parents;
- they suffer from poor working environments;
- they earn below the minimum wage;
- their health needs are enormous and largely unmet;
- they are usually ignorant of their rights.

War-affected persons and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

- some IDPs have been displaced for 17 years;
- there is an intergenerational effect;
- this is a very large vulnerable group;
- they have no formal relationship with Government - often left with NGOs.
- abduction of able-bodied adults and children;
- IDPs live in camps on handouts, with inadequate social services.

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Some specific recommendations were made in the consultation workshop to provide better social protection for these groups. Many of these ideas focused on indirect approaches to resolve the problems faced by vulnerable groups, such as sensitisation for behavioural and attitudinal change, conflict resolution and peace and reconciliation initiatives, and changes to the legislative and regulatory framework (e.g. to introduce minimum standards in employment practices). Other suggestions emphasised the non-material needs of vulnerable groups, such as psychosocial counselling or trauma therapy for war-affected people, and empowering workers by raising their awareness about their rights. Finally, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development was strongly encouraged to take its central role in supervising and coordination social protection initiatives more seriously. It is worth noting that most of these interventions require relatively little financial inputs, contradicting the widespread belief that social protection interventions are by definition very expensive, and therefore unaffordable in poor countries.

Interventions

1.   The study team recommends a three-tier approach to social protection in Uganda:

    (1)   strengthen the formal provision of social insurance to formal sector workers, through the new improved national social security system;

    (2)   build on informal mechanisms for extending social protection to informal sector workers and others located beyond the reach of formal mechanisms;

    (3)   strengthen the regulatory framework and expand sensitisation campaigns, to improve rights and equity for the socially vulnerable.

    Workers should contribute to social insurance schemes – pensions, health insurance, unemployment insurance, funeral insurance – on the Western model. For those outside the formal economy, Government should provide social assistance as far as is fiscally and administratively possible.

2.   There are many micro-initiatives underway in Uganda that are achieving great success but on a very limited scale. These include microfinance and micro-health insurance schemes, programmes and institutions that provide support to PLWA, PWD, orphans and other vulnerable groups. In most of these sub-sectors it is clear that demand exceeds supply, yet providers face constraints – financial, technical, personnel – which constrains their ability to scale up to meet demand at national or even local level. Some programmes have limited national coverage (e.g. FASERT, FINCA, or UWESO, which is operational only in nine districts), while others cannot cater for demand even in the communities where they are located (e.g. most local NGOs and community-based programmes). Three follow-up activities are relevant:

    (1)   an assessment of the demand for these under-supplied services;

    (2)   prioritisation among the services delivered by these programmes and institutions;

    (3)   finding ways to scale up or replicate selected programmes to meet demand, where scaling up means expanding the activities of existing agencies, while replication means finding additional agencies to implement the programme. In general, replication is preferable to scaling up: the most successful projects that the study team visited are small and run by dedicated people, whereas there is a danger of national programmes becoming complacent and losing the qualities that make the small-scale initiatives so successful.

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Processes and Institutionalisation

3.   Partnerships between social protection providers are needed, whereby Government provides the regulatory framework, NGO and community-based initiatives are supported at the local level through interacting with local government structures, and the private sector is empowered to provide social protection to the informal economy. A framework is needed that allows flexible affiliations of state and non-state actors.

4.   Given the fragmented nature of social protection that is delivered to designated vulnerable groups, and the dominance of the large sector Ministries (Health and Education) in social spending in Uganda, there might be a case for a Ministry of Social Welfare (or at least a Department) to be created, with a mandate to:

- mobilise resources;

- coordinate actors and activities engaged in this sector;

- design and implement effective social protection programmes; for these vulnerable groups.

5.   An initial activity of the Ministry of Social Welfare should be to commission a series of 'Vulnerability Profiles' for designated vulnerable groups, which would profile the group's characteristics and generate a 'needs articulation', using participatory methods. As a point of principle, this Ministry or Department would focus more on the needs of *groups* and less on *sector* programming.

Information Gaps and Research Needs

6.   An inventory of NGOs and CBOs should be compiled that lists all non-formal agencies engaged in various social protection activities, including their main projects, target groups, and geographical coverage. Sources for this inventory include the Directory of NGOs, Uganda Women's Network (UWONET), and other networks of formal and informal organisations active in related issues in Uganda.

7.   The Uganda Bureau of Statistics is designing an Integrated Vulnerability Module for incorporation into the Uganda National Household Survey 2002/2003, specifically to be administered in the north to provide baseline information for the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund [NUSAF]. The study team has met with the World Bank and EPRC consultants who are designing this module, and have established that they are willing to release the data to us after the survey is completed (scheduled for October). This will potentially generate a lot of information of relevance to the analysis of vulnerability and the design of social protection interventions for conflict-affected groups in Uganda. It is recommended that time and resources are allocated to further analysis of this data.

8.   Are informal social security systems strong enough that formal systems need not be extended to the rural poor, or are they collapsing under the strain of conflict, HIV/AIDS, and chronic poverty? This is an important question that will inform the decision about how much formal social protection is needed for 'traditional' communities where informal systems are still significant. Further research is needed on the role and resilience of informal social support systems in Uganda, and their trends over time.

9.   It is important to consider the positions of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, on the one hand, and the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, on the other, about the 'deregulation debate'. There is a perception by employers and those who prioritise economic growth – the Ministry of Finance, the World Bank – that regulation of labour markets (e.g. minimum wage legislation) is an excessive cost on business and that government should withdraw from 'interfering' in the labour market, since Uganda cannot afford excessive regulation.. Conversely, those who prioritise social protection and workers' rights argue that more regulation is needed to protect low-paid, low status workers against exploitation by employers. Perhaps a labour economist should be placed in the Department of Labour, representing the interests of workers and the social equity and workers' rights concerns of the MGLSD, to negotiate with the Deregulation Project in the Ministry of Finance.

Next Steps

Three clear and important follow-up activities are suggested by this study. Firstly, the analysis and recommendations presented in this Report should be incorporated into the finalisation of the Social Development Sector Strategic Investment Plan (SDIP). The outcome would be a revised version of the SDIP that has social protection concerns and priorities mainstreamed throughout.

Secondly, it is important to identify priority social protection interventions in Uganda that are likely to have the greatest impact on poor people and vulnerable groups. These interventions need to be costed, and their relative cost-effectiveness against alternative initiatives should be assessed. These priority interventions must then be mainstreamed institutionally. For instance, if school feeding is identified as a cost-effective intervention with high social protection benefits, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health need to be involved in implementation, while UNICEF and/or the World Food Programme might be approached for financial and technical support.

Finally, a clear opportunity – and imperative – exists to incorporate a more comprehensive and disaggregated analysis of vulnerability and vulnerable groups in Uganda into the next round of revision of the PEAP. The current Poverty Eradication Action Plan (2001-2003) focuses heavily on 'pro-poor growth' and pays little attention to conventional instruments of social protection. The PEAP has only half a page on social assistance, and the Executive Summary makes only one brief reference to "programmes to support the livelihoods of groups who cannot support themselves", mentioning in this context "child-headed households and households headed by disabled people", and orphans. There is scope to expand and deepen this dimension of the PEAP. The recommendations made in this study should build on the four pillars of the existing PEAP, from a social protection perspective. For example, policies to reduced vulnerability can also reduce poverty – not necessarily through expensive social security programmes, but also through targeted interventions and regulatory change. To maximise political acceptability and mainstream social goals alongside the economic objectives of the PEAP, it is important to make a strong case for the economic benefits of social protection.

ANNEX 1. LIST OF PEOPLE CONSULTED

Institution	Initiative	Persons Met
Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development	Naguru Reception Centre	Mrs. Christine Kajumba (*Warden*)
Ministry of Education and Sports	Universal Primary Education	Mr. Bulondo Ssemuwemba (*Assistant Commissioner, Primary Education*)
Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development	Jobs for Africa	Mr. Richard Kwezira (*Project Coordinator*)
Office of the Prime Minister	Northern Uganda Social Action Fund [NUSAF]	Timothy Lubanga (*Project Coordinator*)
World Bank	World Bank perspective on Social Protection	Mr. Sudharshan Canagarajah (*Senior Economist*)
Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development	Revision of the PEAP	Mr. Kenneth Mugambe (*Assistant Commissioner*)
Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development	Functional Adult Literacy Programme	Mr. Baryayebwa (*Commissioner, Functional Adult Literacy and Elderly Department*)
Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development	Micro-credit (YES Scheme)	Mr. George Bekunda (*Commissioner, Dept of Poverty Eradication, Economic & Civic Rights*)
Office of the Prime Minister	Government Restocking Programme	Mr. James Okuja (*Desk Officer in Charge, Restocking Programme*)
Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development	Directorate of Labour	Mr. C. Olwenyi (*Director, Labour*)
Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development	Programme for Enhancing Adolescent Reproductive Life [PEARL]	Mr. James Odit (*Programme Manager*)
Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development	National Social Security Fund [NSSF]	Acting Managing Director
Economic Policy and Research Centre	Makerere University	Dr. Peter Mijumbi (*Senior Researcher*)
Uganda Women's Effort to Save Orphans [UWESO]	UWESO Orphan Support Programmes	Mr. David Nalumanyi (*Financial Controller*) Mr. William Mbonigaba (*Credit Officer*)
Office of the Prime Minister	Disaster Preparedness Relief	Mr. C. Twesigome (*Commissioner, Disaster Preparedness & Refugees*) Mr. M. J. Owor (*Assistant Commissioner, Disaster Management*)

Institution	Initiative	Persons Met
Foundation for Advancement of Small Enterprises and Rural Technologies [FASERT]	Micro-health insurance for informal sector workers	Mr. Alex Menya (*Executive Director*) Mr. Vincent F. Ntege (*Programme Director*)
Bank of Uganda	Microfinance	Mr. Anthony Opio (*Director, Non-Banking Financial Institutions*)
National Union of Disabled Persons [NUDIPU]	Programmes for People With Disabilities	Mr. Patrick Nulera (*Deputy Director*)
Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development		Hon. Alex Kamugisha (*Acting Minister*)
Private Sector Foundation	Private Sector Foundation programmes	Mr. Gideon Badagawa
Save the Children Fund UK	Initiatives by SCF to deal with vulnerable groups	P. T. Kakama (*Social Development Advisor*)
Field trip to Wakiso		

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