

SOCIAL PROTECTION IN UGANDA

**Study to Inform the Development of a Framework for Social
Protection in the Context of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan**

Phase I Report:

VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT & REVIEW OF INITIATIVES

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Abbreviations

ACP	AIDS Control Programme
ADD	Action on Disability and Development
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AFD	Action For Development
AGASA	Agency for Accessible and Sustainable Agriculture
CBR	Community Based Rehabilitation
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
FASERT	Foundation for Advancement of Small Enterprises and Rural Technologies
FIDA	Uganda Association for Women Lawyers
FOCA	Friends of Children Association
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
ITEK	Institute of Teacher Education, Kyambogo
MFPED	Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development
MGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
NAWOU	National Association of Women's Organisations in Uganda
NCC	National Council for Children
NSSF	National Social Security Fund
NUDIPU	National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda
NUPAWU	National Union of Plantation and Agricultural Workers of Uganda
NUSAF	Northern Uganda Social Action Fund
ODCP	Orphans and Destitute Children Project
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
PAF	Poverty Action Fund
PEAP	Poverty Eradication Action Plan
PLWA	People Living With AIDS
PMA	Plan for the Modernisation of Agriculture
PEARL	Programme for Enhancing Adolescent Reproductive Life
PWD	Persons With Disabilities
SAP	Slum Aid Project
SDIP	Social Development Sector Strategic Investment Plan
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UNPAC	Uganda National Programme of Action for Children
UPE	Universal Primary Education
UPPAP	Uganda's Participatory Poverty Assessment Project
USDC	Uganda Society of Disabled Children
UWESO	Uganda Women's Effort to Save Orphans

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This report concludes Phase I of the study on **Social Protection in Uganda**. It has been drafted by the study team: Dr Stephen Devereux (*Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex*), Mr Charles Lwanga Ntale (*Development Research and Training, Kampala*), and Dr Rachel Sabates-Wheeler (*Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex*). The team was ably assisted by Mrs Brenda Kifuko Malinga (*Freelance Consultant, Kampala*), Mrs Annet Koote (*Freelance Consultant, Kampala*), and Mr Babatunde Omilola (*Research Assistant, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex*). The study team thanks staff at the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, especially Mr Stephen Kasaija (*Principal Economist*), and the members of the Task Force on Social Protection, ably Chaired by Mrs Jane Mpagi (*Director for Gender*), for their guidance and inputs throughout the process.

Objectives

Uganda has made a great deal of progress in recent years in terms of analysing poverty, including implementing a highly influential Participatory Poverty Assessment to complement quantitative household surveys. Uganda has also compiled a Poverty Eradication Action Plan that has served as a model for Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers across the world. Despite these innovative methodologies and strategy documents, certain gaps in understanding and strategising remain. On the analysis side, poverty in Uganda is understood in rather static terms, even though there are dynamic processes at work – such as HIV/AIDS, and conflict or insecurity – that are influencing poverty headcounts and trends to a highly significant degree. This suggests the need for an analysis of vulnerability and risk to complement the standard quantitative and qualitative understanding of poverty in Uganda.

From the perspective of planning for poverty reduction or eradication, the dynamic nature of vulnerability in the Ugandan context suggests a need for implementing basic social protection policies to protect the poor against the adverse economic and social consequences of this vulnerability. To date, much attention has focused on a set of conventional ‘vulnerable groups’ in Uganda, including orphans, people living with AIDS (PLWA), people with disabilities (PWD), internally displaced persons (IDP), widows and the elderly. There are a large number of projects and programmes that provide vital assistance to these groups, but these interventions are patchy and uncoordinated, and are not located within a broader conceptual or policy framework for addressing the needs of Uganda’s vulnerable groups.

This paper attempts to broaden the analysis of vulnerability and strategising to protect the vulnerable in Uganda, within a conceptual framework derived from the emerging literature on ‘social protection’ policy. The paper has four objectives:

1. to define social protection in the Ugandan context and develop a conceptual framework that captures the main sources of vulnerability;
2. to analyse current vulnerability in Uganda within the conceptual framework developed;
3. to review programmes and projects that provide ‘social protection’ of various kinds to the vulnerable in Uganda;
4. to identify information gaps and make recommendations on the development of social protection policies needed for a comprehensive attack on vulnerability in Uganda.

Methodology

Phase I of the study was conducted using a combination of four main methods:

1. **stakeholder interviews**: with government, donors, NGOs and researchers in Kampala ([Annex 1](#) provides a list of persons consulted);
2. **document review**: a number of documents have been consulted (see [Annex 2](#));
3. **field visits**: to Wakiso District to consult Local Government and review local activities (because of time constraints, further planned field visits were not possible);
4. **informal seminars** hosted by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and presented by study team members, on the following social protection topics:
 - Social Protection: Definitions & Concepts;
 - Targeting Social Protection Programmes;
 - Gender, Vulnerability and Social Protection.

These seminars were attended by several Task Force members and generated informative discussions.

Structure of the Report

Chapter 1. Introduction

Describes the rationale and methodology for the study.

Chapter 2. Social Protection: Concepts and Definitions

Sets out a conceptual framework for the analysis of vulnerability and the identification of appropriate social protection interventions to address the sources of vulnerability.

Chapter 3. Analysis of Vulnerability in Uganda

Analyses vulnerability in terms of (i) sources of chronic and transitory risk and vulnerability; (ii) the identification and enumeration of 'vulnerable groups', specifically women, children (including adolescents, orphans, child labourers, and street children), indigenous/ethnic minority groups, conflict-affected groups, people with disabilities, the elderly, people living with HIV/AIDS, agricultural workers, and low-paid workers; (iii) programmes that provide social protection to these and other vulnerable groups in Uganda.

Chapter 4. Social Protection Issues in Uganda

Critically explores constraints and challenges to the effective provision of comprehensive social protection in Uganda, including: financing, political commitment, sustainability, and administrative capacity.

Chapter 5. Recommendations

Conclusions on where further research might be needed, a framework for prioritising social protection interventions in the SDIP, and ideas about how existing social protection programmes can be better co-ordinated to deliver maximum impact.

CHAPTER 2. SOCIAL PROTECTION: CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

Before analysing the nature of vulnerability and reviewing the range of social protection measures that are currently operational in Uganda, it is necessary to define what we mean by 'social protection', and to set the term within a conceptual framework that will allow the identification of socially vulnerable groups as well as the appropriate mechanisms for providing social protection to each group.

Defining Social Protection

Social protection, as an agenda primarily for reducing vulnerability and risk of low-income households with regard to basic consumption and social services, has recently become an important part of the development discourse. However, it remains a term that is unfamiliar to many and has a range of definitions, both in the literature and among policy-makers responsible for implementing social protection programmes. In the Ugandan context, it is clear that the definition and boundaries of social protection are far from agreed, and that different sets of stakeholders perceive social protection in very different ways. For example:

- (i) Some stakeholders adopt a very broad approach, including even universal primary education (UPE), microcredit 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 defined 'vulnerable groups' (e.g. PLWA, people with disabilities, widows, orphans).
- (iii) A more 'political' or 'transformative' view extends social protection to arenas of equity, empowerment and 'social rights', rather than confining the definition to targeted income and consumption transfers.

Some current definitions of social protection from the policy literature are listed in [Box 1](#).

Box 1. Agency Definitions of Social Protection

"Social protection refers to the public actions taken in response to levels of vulnerability, risk and deprivation which are deemed socially unacceptable within a given polity or society" ~ *ODI*

"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 equity" ~ *World Bank*

"Social protection is the provision of benefits to households and individuals through public or collective arrangements to protect against low or declining living standards" ~ *ILO*

"Social protection is a set of policies and programs designed to promote efficient and effective labour markets, protect individuals from the risks inherent in earning a living either in the labour market or small-scale agriculture and provide a floor of support beneath market-based incomes" ~ *Asian Development Bank*

All the definitions in [Box 1](#) share three common elements that we would question:

1. **Problem identification:** According to all these agencies, social protection is required in response to a set of narrowly specified economic problems or livelihood shocks – ‘in response to [unacceptable] levels of vulnerability, risk and deprivation’, ‘managing income risks’, ‘protect against low or declining living standards’, ‘protect individuals from the risks inherent in earning a living’. *This narrowly economic view excludes many elements that we believe should be incorporated in a definition of the problems that social protection is intended to address, particularly ‘social risks’ such as child labour, domestic violence, armed conflict, discrimination and social marginalisation.*
2. **Problem prioritisation:** Each definition prioritises a slightly different set of problems – either ‘low’ levels of income or living standards; or ‘downward fluctuations in incomes’ and ‘declining living standards’. *In our view, social protection should address both types of livelihood threat: 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), as well as social problems arising from poverty and inequality (for which ‘social equity’ is needed).*
3. **Social protection providers:** Each definition refers to ‘public actions’, ‘public or collective measures’, or ‘a set of policies and programs’ – clearly, it is assumed that social protection is delivered mainly through ‘public’ (government) agencies; only the ILO extends to other forms of ‘collective’ provision, which presumably includes community-based and private sector institutions. *This study favours a broader classification of social protection providers in Uganda, including both formal (‘public’ and ‘private’) as well as informal (‘collective’ or ‘community-level’) sources.*

Bearing these points in mind, we have devised our own conceptual and operational definitions of social protection, for purposes of this study (a set of matrices accompanying these definitions is provided later in this chapter). Our *conceptual definition* is as follows:

SOCIAL PROTECTION describes 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 marginalised; with the overall objective of reducing the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups.

Note that this conceptualisation covers *ex ante* (preventive) as well as *ex post* (protective) interventions. Our *working definition* elaborates on mechanisms that deliver social protection:

Social protection is the set of all initiatives, both formal and informal, that provide: social assistance to extremely poor individuals and households; social services to groups who need special care or would otherwise be denied access to basic services; social insurance to protect people against the risks and consequences of livelihood shocks; and social equity to protect people against social risks such as discrimination or abuse. The key objective of social protection is to reduce the vulnerability of the poor. The full range of social protection measures includes: direct income transfers to vulnerable groups, safety nets in case of collapses in livelihoods, regulatory change and sensitisation campaigns to protect the rights of socially and economically disadvantaged groups.

These conceptual and operational definitions cover three categories of vulnerable people, and three forms of social protection:

- (1) the **chronically poor** – who require **social assistance** and social services;
- (2) the **economically vulnerable** – who require **social insurance** and safety nets;
- (3) the **socially marginalised** – who require **social equity** and social rights.

Often these categories overlap, because of the composite nature of vulnerability. For instance, socially marginalised groups – e.g. ethnic minorities, people living with AIDS or disability – are often economically vulnerable as well, being unable to work (in the case of the severely disabled or terminally ill) or being confined to low status livelihood activities that generate low and variable incomes (e.g. Batwa pygmies). Another way of expressing this is that the weakest members of society are usually those who are both economically and socially vulnerable – because these sources of vulnerability interact with and reinforce each other – and they are often in greatest and most urgent need of social protection.

Conceptualising Vulnerability

Our definition of social protection is broader than the definitions listed in Box 1, because our starting point is a much broader conceptualisation of vulnerability than the narrow concept of ‘economic risk’ favoured by the World Bank and other agencies. We identify four sources of vulnerability in Uganda: economic, demographic, political, and sociocultural.

- **Economic/Livelihood risks:** These include both:
 - (1) the ‘currently poor’: despite Uganda’s commendable progress in poverty reduction during the 1990s, 35% of the population remain below the poverty line, and inequality is rising;
 - (2) the ‘potentially poor’: adverse changes in the macroeconomic context (e.g. terms of trade shocks) or the regulatory framework (e.g. deregulation) could push groups of Ugandans into poverty at any time, 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.
- **Sociocultural risks:** These include:
 - (1) at the group level: socially sanctioned discrimination and social exclusion of certain groups such as ethnic minorities (Batwa pygmies);
 - (2) at the individual level: abuse of children and women (including domestic violence).

Social Protection Interventions

The specific instruments, mechanisms and actors involved in social protection provisioning are by no means new. In its narrowest conceptualisation, social protection is equated with social security, where social security is often interpreted as meaning the specific public programs of assistance, insurance and benefits that people can draw upon in order to maintain a minimum level of income. Our approach in this study identifies four sets of interventions that are required to adequately address the social protection needs of the three vulnerable groups listed above:

1. **Social assistance** for the ‘chronically poor’, especially those who are unable to work and earn their livelihood (this equates most closely to old-style ‘social welfare’). *Social assistance* programmes typically include 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 donor support, and/or through NGO projects.
2. **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 (this is similar to ‘social safety nets’). *Social insurance* programmes refer to formalised systems of pensions, health insurance, maternity benefit and unemployment benefits, with tripartite financing between the employer, the employee and the state. It also includes informal mechanisms, such as savings clubs and funeral societies.
3. **Social services** for the poor and groups needing special care, including orphanages and reception centres for abandoned children, feeding camps and settlement areas for refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, Universal Primary Education and abolition of health charges in order to extend access to basic services to the very poor.
4. **Social equity** for ‘socially vulnerable groups’, such as victims of domestic violence or sexual abuse, marginalised minorities, and stigmatised groups such as PLWA. *Social equity* interventions include changes to the regulatory framework that protect vulnerable or minority groups against discrimination and abuse, as well as sensitisation campaigns (e.g. the ‘HIV/AIDS Anti-Stigma Campaign’, launched in Uganda on 31 July 2002) to transform public attitudes and behaviour.

Specifically, we include the following interventions under the umbrella of social protection:

- targeted **resource transfers** – including cash or food handouts or subsidies to the poor, and guaranteed financial support to people who experience livelihood shocks;
- delivery of **social services** to vulnerable groups – the abolition of health and education charges, institutions that provide care for people unable to provide for themselves;
- **social insurance** – pension systems, health insurance, funeral societies, retrenchment packages.
- changes in the **regulatory framework** – for example, a statutory minimum wage and maternity benefits, anti-corruption legislation, outlawing of ‘widow inheritance’;
- **sensitisation campaigns** for attitudinal and behavioural change – such as initiatives to reduce negative stereotyping and treatment of PLWA or PWD.

Typically, discussions of social protection in Western countries limit their thinking to a narrow technical conceptualisation of specific state-funded and managed programmes. However, in most poor countries, due to a variety of constraints that typically restrict the range of extensive social protection services offered by the welfare state, the concept of social protection must be widened to include both private and public mechanisms for social protection provisioning. These constraints – all of which apply to Uganda – include:

- limited scope for private insurance against risk, given the underdeveloped nature of credit and insurance markets;
- limited scope for social insurance, given high levels of self-employment, of unstable and irregular wage employment and widespread underemployment, rather than ‘unemployment’;
- limitations on available resources for formal social protection measures, given low tax-generated revenue and competing demands on the budget;
- limited scope for means-testing, given irregularity of incomes and diversity of income sources, which might allow for more targeted transfers to the needy;
- limitations in reaching rural (and even urban informal sector) populations which are spatially scattered, occupationally diverse and administratively difficult to service.

These constraints are created and determined by the pervasive nature of poverty and vulnerability characteristic of developing countries. For these reasons many development agencies, such as DFID, the World Bank and the ILO have broadened their understanding of social protection. The World Bank couches its discussion of social protection within a Social Risk Management framework. Even then, the conceptualisation remains confined to income vulnerability and remains quite instrumentalist. The conceptual emphasis is *on risk management which frames social protection as both a safety net, and a springboard through human capital development*. The ILO stresses the need for *insurance and extension of provision to those in the informal sector*. In addition to risk and vulnerability management and social insurance, DFID is also interested in protection of the very vulnerable and deprived, specifically people who face socially unacceptable levels of vulnerability. Clearly the focus of each organisation on social protection reflects the larger mandate of that organisation.

It should also be noted that problems that are conventionally thought of as ‘social’ rather than ‘economic’ – e.g. conflict and the plight of refugees, or victims of domestic violence – often have negative economic consequences as well. Refugees and IDPs have mostly been taken out of productive employment and are now dependent on external support, rather than contributing to agricultural production and income generation. Similarly, studies have shown that violence against women and abuse or neglect of children undermines economic growth. It follows that social protection interventions can have positive economic as well as social benefits. Other studies have shown that targeted transfers of cash, agricultural inputs or food to the poor can increase their incomes sustainably, through investment and improved productivity as their nutrition status improves. For example, impact assessments of school feeding programmes have found that enrolment, attendance, concentration in class and performance in examinations can all be enhanced through the provision of a meal to learners – which has the potential to improve their chances of securing better paid employment in adult life.

This point is important to emphasise, because there is a tendency to dismiss social protection interventions as ‘welfarist’ or ‘charity’, as though these programmes simply consume scarce public resources and are therefore ‘unaffordable’ in poor countries like Uganda. This is not our view. Instead, we believe that well designed and targeted social protection interventions can

contribute both directly and indirectly to Uganda's poverty reduction goals, and to the objectives of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP).

Social protection in poor countries like Uganda must be fully integrated with anti-poverty policies, as set out in the PEAP, and must be broadly conceived in view of the complex, multi-dimensional nature of poverty, risk and social deprivation. In keeping with this we see social protection as conceptually very broad. This reflects the fact that many vulnerable groups within Uganda fall outside the reach of conventional measures. For instance, while microfinance is not normally considered as part of social protection, it is an important substitute for the absence of insurance markets.

If the need for social protection is defined in the narrow 'safety net' sense, as mechanisms for 'smoothing consumption' in response to declining or fluctuating incomes, then the focus of interventions will logically be on targeted income/consumption transfers to affected individuals. In our view, the range of interventions that can contribute to the provision of social protection is much broader than resource transfers, though these are obviously important in cases where vulnerable groups are literally unable to survive on their own resources. Targeted income transfers actually provide 'economic protection' in response to economic risks and livelihood vulnerability. 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.

Table 1 lists some of the main 'vulnerable groups' in Uganda. Note that there are many overlaps across categories – a single individual can belong to several vulnerable groups – because of the composite nature of vulnerability, as noted above.

Table 1. 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 with disabilities (PWD) ▪ Chronically sick ▪ HIV/AIDS sufferers and carers ▪ Victims of domestic abuse ▪ Ethnic minority groups ▪ Street children 	<p><u>Urban</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Urban unemployed ▪ Low-paid workers ▪ Informal sector workers ▪ Beggars and squatters <p><u>Rural</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rural landless ▪ Cash-crop farmers ▪ Pastoralists ▪ Plantation workers

Table 2 provides a conceptual framework for categorising social protection interventions by type of strategy (promotive, preventive and protective), and by provider or source of social protection (individual/household, group/community, market, state/donors). Table 3 presents an analytical framework for examining specific interventions that fall under the rubric of social protection in Uganda, by vulnerability categories (chronically poor, economically at risk, socially vulnerable) and by category of interventions (social assistance, social insurance, and social equity).

Table 2. A Matrix for Conceptualising Social Protection Interventions

Strategy \ Provider	Individual/Household	Group/Community	Market	State/Donors
Promotive: “Economic”	Preventive health practices Migration More secure income sources	Collective action for infrastructure (feeder roads, school buildings, etc.) Common Property Resource management		Sound macroeconomic policy Environment policy Education and training Public health policy Infrastructure Active labour market policy
Promotive: Transformative	Intrahousehold bargaining	Women’s groups; lobbying/advocacy groups; collective action	Trade unions (campaigning for workers’ rights, improved wages and conditions etc.)	Legislation: Anti-discrimination Anti-corruption
Preventive: Diversification	Crop and plot diversification Income source diversification Investment in physical and human capital	Occupation associations Rotating savings and credit associations	Savings accounts on financial institutions Micro-finance	Agricultural extension Liberalised trade Protection of property rights
Preventive: Insurance	Marriage and extended family Sharecropper tenancy Buffer crops	Investment in social capital	Old age annuities Accident insurance Disability insurance	Pension systems Mandate insurance for illness, unemployment, disability and other risks
Protective	Rationing of consumption Informal gifts and loans	Transfers from networks of mutual support	Sales of financial assets Loans from financial institutions	Social assistance Workfare Subsidies Social Funds Cash transfers

Table 3. A Framework for Analysing Social Protection Programmes in Uganda

Vulnerability Categories	Affected Groups	Category of Interventions	Types of Programmes
Chronically Poor	Severely disabled	Social Assistance	Disability benefit
	Terminally ill		Single-parent allowances
	Ethnic minorities		Social pensions
	Urban unemployed		Food aid
	Pastoralists		Food-for-work
Economically At Risk	Cash crop farmers	Social Insurance	Formalised pensions
	Internally Displaced Persons		Unemployment benefits
	Orphans		Health insurance
	Informal sector workers		Maternity benefits
	Widows and the Elderly		Accident insurance
Socially Vulnerable	Ethnic minorities	Social Equity	Sensitisation campaigns
	People living with AIDS		Changes to the regulatory framework to protect vulnerable and minority groups against discrimination and abuse
	Victims of domestic abuse		
	People with disabilities		Operationalising economic, social and cultural rights
	Female-headed households		
	Abducted children		