THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA
MINISTRY OF GENDER, LABOUR
AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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EXPANDING
SOCIAL
PROTECTION

Systemic Lessons from Implementing the Expanding Social Protection (ESP) Pilot

A summary of lessons learnt during the first phase of implementing the Expanding Social Protection Programme- Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.

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Foreword

The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development through Expanding Social Protection Programme has been implementing a 5 year Expanding Social Protection Programme (ESPP) since 2011 in partnership with DFID, Irish Aid and UNICEF. The goal of the program was to improve life chances of poor men, women and children in Uganda. The programme was aimed at developing a National Social Protection Policy framework, implement two direct income support pilot schemes and generate evidence on impacts of the programme on beneficiaries.

For the past five years, the Government of Uganda with support from UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and Irish Aid have piloted an old age pension for everyone over 65 years of age – and 60 years in the Karamoja region – across fifteen of the country's 112 districts. The program has reached about 125,000 people. The transfer is currently set at UGX 25,000 (US$7.50) per month and is paid every two months. This publication shares the views and experiences of the people who have benefited from the programme.

The grant has shown evidence of positive changes in the lives of beneficiaries and their households. The positive changes cover a wide range of areas including reductions in poverty and hunger, improved diets, investments in productive activities by beneficiaries, greater dignity for older people, better lives for children, and more dynamic local markets. These changes are evidence that sustained roll out of SAGE will increase the impacts of the program thus contributing to the aspirations of the Vision 2040 to change the country from a predominantly low income to a competitive upper middle income country within 30 years.

Pius Bigirimana
Permanent Secretary

Acknowledgement

I acknowledge the support received from all individuals and organisations whose guidance and support was most valuable in developing this report.

I am grateful to the management and staff of the Expanding Social Protection (ESP) Programme for their efforts in thinking through and sharing these lessons. I greatly appreciate the contribution of the entire district SAGE staff in putting together the lessons in the SAGE district quarterly reports

Special thanks go to the Monitoring Evaluation, Reporting and Learning Unit who tirelessly supported the development of this report.

Jane Namuddu

Acronyms

ESP	Expanding Social Protection
DFID	Department For International Development
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VFG	Vulnerable Family Grant
SCG	Senior Citizens Grant
SAGE	Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment
MFPED	Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
NBFP	National Budget Framework Paper
UPFSP	Uganda Forum for Social Protection
MDA	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
SP	Social Protection
NSPP	National Social Protection Policy
MTN	Mobile Telecommunications Network
CDOs	Community Development Officers
LC1	Local Council 1
VFSG	Vulnerable Family Support Grant
DIS	Direct Income support
MM	Mobile Money
USPP	Uganda Social Protection Platform
PPI	Programme Plan of Intervention

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1.0 Background

The Expanding Social Protection (ESP) Programme is a Government of Uganda initiative implemented under the Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development. Since 2006, the ministry has championed efforts to promote social protection in the country. These efforts culminated in the design of ESP which was approved by Cabinet in June 2010. The five-year pilot programme was funded by the UKaid Department for International Development (DFID), Irish Aid and UNICEF. The Goal of ESP is to reduce chronic poverty and improve life chances for poor men, women and children in Uganda. Its aim is to embed a national social protection system that benefits the poorest as a core element of Uganda's national policy, planning and budgeting processes.

The programme was designed around two main outputs:

a) Policy Support – focusing on strengthening leadership of the Government of Uganda on social protection across government, developing a national social protection policy, generating evidence on the impacts of social protection, and building government commitment and investment in social protection

b) Implementation of a cash transfer pilot (Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment – SAGE) to generate evidence on the impact and feasibility of delivering small, regular and reliable direct income support to poor and vulnerable households.

The pilot programme was implemented in 15 districts1[1], with over 123000 enrolled beneficiaries. At its inception, SAGE had two types of grants: a Senior Citizen Grant (SCG) – or Social Pension – for older people aged 65 years and above (60 years in Karamoja region) and a Vulnerable Family Grant (VFG) targeting very vulnerable families even if recipients were below 65 years of age. Beneficiaries of both grants started by receiving **UShs 22,000** a month. The programme had an annual increase of 1000/= to cater for inflation. Over the years it was increased to 25,000. This was eventually delivered as Shs 50,000 (USD15) every two months. At least US$ 30.3 million was disbursed by January 2016.

[1] Apac, Kaberamaido,Katakwi, Kiboga, Kyenjojo, Moroto, Nakapiripirit, Nebbi, Amudat,Kyege-gwa, Kyankwanzi, Zombo, Napak, Kole and Yumbe.

ESP developed Learning Framework with the objective of guiding documentation of programme evidence questions and generating lessons from implementation of the pilot.

1.1 Objectives of capturing and documenting lessons

ESP lessons are generated and documented to:

- Facilitate the exchange of experiences and lessons learned in the implementation of the ESP programme.
- Inform internal social protection programme improvements specifically in the areas of implementation
- Inform the design and implementation of future social protection and related programmes.
- Contribute to the corpus of knowledge on design and implementation of social

2.0 Lessons

1.2 Methodology

Identification of the lessons was done with the guidance of the learning framework. This was used to identify lessons that were discussed and agreed upon within the respective units for consensus. Priority lessons were presented in the quarterly learning meeting. District SAGE teams had similar processes for documenting lessons from districts and incorporating them in the quarterly reports. In addition, the research and evidence coordinator reviewed the quarterly reports for presentation in the learning meetings.

Although various lessons were documented, many were initially missed. Staff got involved in many activities that could generate lessons yet minimal effort was made in identifying or even documenting these lessons.

It is therefore important that in future, similar programs clearly streamline ways in which lessons can be collected and documented. Staff should also be sensitised on the importance of lessons and encouraged to document them or share them for documentation.

1.3 Structure of the report

The lessons are presented on the basis of themes generated in relation to the programme management structure to include: priority setting and advocacy, policy setting and policy development, program design and implementation, monitoring and evaluation, program management and institutional development, and conclusions.

2.1 Priority Setting and Advocacy

Sharing evidence on the impact of the programme with political leaders and technical officers increased their appreciation of the SAGE programme.

It is important to ensure that both politicians and technical persons are conversant with the impact of the SAGE pilot to enable them appreciate its contribution. Although there

was evidence on the impact of SAGE program, little was known about this by both political and technical officials. Evidence was shared through meetings, information briefs, newsletters presentations in workshops and field visits to increase awareness.

Participants were able to triangulate what they heard in meetings and workshops with what was on the ground. Although not all participants attended the various events as planned, the political leaders that turned up shared the value and impact of the program with their colleagues in various fora. Technical staff who understood more about the program and its impact could share the evidence in their respective sectors and could ably answer any questions to clarify what was actually on the ground. As a result, allies and advocates of the programme increased among different stakeholders.

Civil Society organisations have played a significant role in social protection advocacy. ESP advocacy strategy downplayed the importance of civil society support until 2013.

However, the programme benefitted enormously from civil society activism in support of the expansion of the SCG and the subsequent lobbying of the President by political leaders from Yumbe and Acholi regions for expansion of the SCG to their constituencies. The role of civil society is often most effective when CSOs act as a bridge between the poor and vulnerable and their political representatives. In order to ensure effective civil society advocacy for the programme, ESPP supported capacity building to equip CSOs with knowledge on social protection and skills.

Branding is a critical foundation for the success of a program.

The context within which ESP was starting in July 2010 after cabinet approval was negative and of bad press: low public perception of Government's ability to implement a programme of the kind; another channel for Governments officials 'siphoning' money, UShs 22,000 considered very little money and a mockery for beneficiaries; as well the claim that the grants would encourage laziness, drinking, etc. It was critical that the programme starts by addressing these wrong perceptions, but also projecting the correct facts and position appropriately. To address the negativity and build positivity, ESP constructed a brand (image and identity) that defined how they wanted to be seen by the public and it clarified who ESP was and its challenges. The general public perception of ESP became one of a serious programme meticulously planned to deliver.

Consistent, strategic and responsive communication and messaging helped ESP to get a second chance to be listened to, and to change people's minds and perceptions and even gain support from hitherto negative forces. The successful brand and support ESP received have seen it develop to "one of the best Government programmes".

Older persons Associations and grassroots are necessary in sustaining the demand for social protection.

Following three years of prioritizing engagement with the national political leadership, grassroots support became increasingly important for sustaining demand for social protection. In the wake of the Cabinet decision not to roll-out the SCG starting in 2014/15 as originally proposed by the MGLSD, it became difficult for political leaders to make the case for a national roll-out. Consequently it became increasingly important for the Uganda Social Protection Platform (USPP), working with several older persons organisations, to make active contributions to the debate on extension of the SCG nationally. This included sharing of experiences with beneficiaries and older persons' representatives from SAGE districts. Indeed, older persons presented a petition to the Speaker of Parliament and requested H.E. the President for a meeting on rolling out SCG.

The Uganda Parliamentary Forum for Social Protection (UPFSP) was instrumental in increasing social protection awareness and enhancing advocacy among Parliamentarians.

In addition to successful lobbying in the first half of the year, in August 2015 the UPFSP participated in a Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group Q&A session on the 2015/16 budget with the MFPED. In addition, the USPP partnered with UPFSP to promote the Older Persons Manifesto as a spring board to enhance political support for the SCG. However, while expanding the network of such strategic partnerships is critical for success of SP advocacy, a greater diversity of voices brings the risk of diluted and/or contradictory messaging. ESPP needs to proactively manage such risk and advise/mentor partners accordingly. This approach has been successful with the USPP so far.

Support to the Uganda Social Protection Platform was crucial in improving their capacity effectively advocate for social protection

Over the last two years, members of the platform have leveraged their internal resources and executed good advocacy campaigns. The latest was an intensive

grassroots campaign mobilizing local government leaders across Uganda to support the national rollout of the Senior Citizens Grant. Nevertheless, because the levels of capacity within the platform members vary significantly, it is necessary to continue providing support particularly in regard to planning, execution of advocacy activities and communication. Ultimately, the platform will need to establish an independent and dedicated secretariat through which technical assistance can be delivered. This is especially important as social protection gains more ground in the policy discourse, as the new Social Protection Policy takes effect.

2.2 Policy Setting and Policy Development

Development of a policy that is multi-sectoral in nature requires appreciation of the issues by different stakeholders.

The social protection subsector has many actors with interventions being fragmented and each stakeholder with their own understanding of social protection. It was extremely important to agree on the policy direction and coordination mechanisms. There was need for various actors to give their input into the policy development process. In order to achieve this, the policy draft had to be shared in advance to enable stakeholder input. Meetings also had to be organised to have consensus within the initial team of stakeholders and harmonise divergent views and agree on how best to narrow the scope of SP.

Wider Consultations helped build consensus in the policy formulation process.

Consultations for policy development targeted stakeholders including Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), stakeholders in 45 districts, and Kampala Capital City Authority councillors. The wide consultations led to building of consensus on the scope of Social Protection in Uganda, evidence-based policy development, enhanced ownership among the key SP implementing sectors, ownership of the draft policy, contribution to the policy from a wide range and significant number of stakeholders, better understanding of social protection by staff of MDAs and local government stakeholders, clarity of the risks and vulnerability context in Uganda, buy-in and commitment to SP by all the local governments that were consulted, a large base of champions of SP was built among over 1,000 stakeholders who were consulted and there was a refocus on the policy.

Meeting stakeholders in their locations during consultations is a more effective way of getting input from key decision makers.

The social protection policy development process commenced in 2011 with a scoping exercise to agree on the definition of social protection in Uganda and several studies conducted to provide evidence for policy development. Drafting of the policy document was done by a selected working group. Following the development of the draft were stakeholder consultations at central and local government levels. Consultations took various forms, including workshops in hotels, meetings and ministry boardrooms at the convenience of a selected ministry. It strongly emerged that while key technical people who make important decisions cannot easily attend hotel workshops due to busy schedules, they can attend meetings conveniently organised in their ministry boardrooms. This can coincide with senior management meetings or may be at other preferred times.

Generating stakeholder consensus on contentious issues on social protection is important for sustainability of SP interventions in Uganda.

The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, with support from the World Bank, DFID, Irish AID and UNICEF, conducted an SP sector review to identify the gaps in the development of the social protection policy. The process, from December 2013 to June 2014, brought together various stakeholders to discuss various and differing interests. The stakeholders agreed to move together in the same direction. The review provided a framework for discussions on basket funding and agreement on phasing of social protection interventions. The consultations brought on board most of the stakeholders who would be consulted on the on the PPI. It raised the profile of

MGLSD and ESP in coordinating SP. All the stakeholders agreed that MGLSD should lead in coordinating the social protection interventions.

Development of acceptable national guidelines can best be achieved through involvement of implementers and key stakeholders to enable adoption and ownership.

The World Bank and World Food Programme have been implementing public works programmes in Northern and North Eastern Uganda through various actors. The actors have however been uncoordinated, hence the need for providing a forum to bring these actors together for effective coordination and information sharing. A technical working group on public works was constituted, bringing together actors implementing

public works programmes. Information was shared among the stakeholders and agreement reached to develop national guidelines on labour-based public works programme implementation that all stakeholders are comfortable with and happy to follow.

Training and exposure of government technical officers in social protection was vital in enhancing their understanding and appreciation of social protection.

In all sector ministries, technical people play a major role in producing documents to inform government's planning and budgeting processes. Training them in social protection was therefore critical to equip them with the necessary knowledge on social protection in Uganda. The officers trained in Designing and Implementing Social Transfers had a major contribution during the development of the National Social Protection Policy.

Secretaries', who were all supportive and only made proposals to strengthen the policy, and specifically areas to mobilize resources for its implementation.

2.3 Program Design and Implementation

The simplicity of the targeting mechanism used influences perceptions, views and attitudes of community members.

In the Vulnerable Family Grant (VFG), targeting was made using a set of proxy indicators based on weighted demographic characteristics to target households. This was complicated and difficult to explain to technical officers at district and sub county levels as well as community members and beneficiaries. This resulted in mistrust among community members especially non beneficiaries, with many of them claiming favouritism, discrimination and corruption in the VFG beneficiary selection process. This was the opposite for the Senior Citizen Grant (SCG) targeting mechanism which was considered easy to understand, appropriate and targeting the right people. It is therefore important to always ensure the eligibility criteria is clear, well understood and easy to explain by technical officers to enable them easily articulate the criteria for selection to fellow officers and community members (both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries).

Helping communities understand the targeting methodology is critical in implementation of social protection interventions.

Male recipients in the VFG households felt stigmatised and under-looked by community members who refer to them as 'women'. According to the programme design, VFG gives priority to women aged 18-64 years as preferred household recipients of the grant; as a result community members consider the VFG a women's grant. In the process of implementation of phase two districts, the process changed to include men as recipients of the grant. These men, however, felt stigmatized and were asked why they were benefiting and whether they turned into women. As a result, they felt they had lost their status in society. The situation was made worse by the beneficiaries' failure to explain the beneficiary selection process or how they got themselves onto the program as recipients on behalf of their households. It is, therefore, important to ensure that any change in the design is clearly communicated to beneficiaries to minimise such situations.

Linking beneficiaries to existing services and programmes helps maximise impacts and outcomes of direct income support grants.

Beyond receiving the cash, the process of delivery of grants creates opportunities for reaching out to beneficiaries in health, education, agriculture and civic education among others. Pay points, for example, act as a single access point on pay days as they bring together all beneficiaries (elderly and vulnerable people or persons with disabilities within a given sub-county or parish. In health, for example, this is an opportunity to enhance health services through provision of outreach services, health sensitisation campaigns to elderly and vulnerable people or identifying health needs of the population. This can, however, only be successful with identification of potential players, nature of services to be provided as well as facilitating identified players to implement selected programs and services.

Decisions to contract independent service providers in a cash related program requires a critical examination of the methodology with the support of a Finance expert/ consultant.

The SAGE team has continued to work with MTN to refine its operating and business model for delivering SAGE payments. Support provided has ranged from the development of effective sub-contracting arrangements between MTN and its dealers (including the development of sub-contractor performance management

systems), to modelling operating costs and developing new approaches to risk management. Service providers' systems will often need to be customized over time and they may require significant support in doing this, ensuring that new systems meet the programme's requirements. Institutions charged with overall management of cash transfer programmes need to have the technical and human resource capacity to provide this support.

Flexibility and Adaptability in programme implementation and systems development helps in taking care of beneficiaries in unique local environments.

SAGE has some hard-to-reach areas in terms of network coverage, security, transport, payment agents and grid power. Karamoja and Kyegegwa, districts, for example, have challenges ranging from poor/no mobile money network, insecurity, poor road network with at times impassable roads during rainy seasons, limited access to grid power, no/or few mobile money agents, huge sub-counties and large refugee settlements. Amudat and Zombo are border districts with residents having relatives across the border; this makes the issue of nationality and citizenship key during enrolment. Tailoring implementation and payment modalities to the local environment is therefore important, hence strategies such as providing transport for MM Agents from neighbouring districts and the manual payment modality have been designed to deliver payments in areas without MM network.

Communicating changes in programme implementation guidelines requires a clear dissemination agenda to enable uniformity in content and information flow.

There has been development of new guidelines and revisions in programme implementation since the programme started. Changes have also been made in payment frequency and procedures. Communicating such changes to the stakeholders and implementers has, however, not been done uniformly, leading to misunderstanding and at times total confusion in the use and interpretation of new/ revised guidelines. It is, therefore, important to have clearer and organised ways of communicating any changes to the stakeholders.

Use of local council general secretaries as focal point persons for programmes that require documentation is better than use of village chairpersons who may have lower levels of literacy.

During programme implementation, it was noted that due to the low literacy levels of the local council chairpersons, documentation of some information did not take place as had been intended. This led to changes in implementation with parish chiefs playing the role that had been anticipated to be for local council chairpersons hence the need to consider literacy levels of proposed program implementers prior to allocation of duties.

Clarity of roles and responsibilities for various payment service providers reduces confusion and mistrust.

At the inception of the program, Sim-card distribution and registration was the role of MTN, with over 80% of the process decentralised at regional centres where MTN representatives worked with the SAGE teams to plan and execute work. Though fairly successful, the enrolment had some challenges, including absence of clear guidelines for mass enrolment, weak controls, accountability and reporting of cards issued, poor planning and ad hoc management of the process and incomplete registration of a significant number of cards hence a major cause of failed payments. On realising the challenges, a change was made and now central registration, enrolment and cards activation is done by the secretariat with the district teams doing the verification and cards distribution. MTN is however responsible for assigning an agent to register and activate the cards on the MTN system. This change has led to a reduction in incidents of failed payment due to inactive cards and there is better accountability for Sim-cards.

Entrusting local leaders with overseeing critical program processes can result in conflict of interest hence going against program guidelines.

Despite having worked with the SAGE teams to deliver payments since program inception, local leaders have the potential to go against program guidelines when left to implement without the SAGE staff. In both Kole and Apac districts, it was revealed that when SAGE staff are not at pay points, local leaders (parish chiefs and CDO's) have not always followed procedures. This includes making payments to unregister red alternative recipients on the grounds that they and the other beneficiaries all 'know' them as daughters or sons of the beneficiaries in question. This poses a risk of fraud as beneficiaries or registered alternative recipients can also turn up and claim they were not paid.

SAGE has increased Civic responsibility and positive response to government programs and requirements specifically to do with registrations especially within the pilot districts. People are now more responsive to government programs and initiatives compared to the period before SAGE. People are now active and eager to provide the correct information when called upon to undertake any registration exercises. Previous experience shows that some of the would-be beneficiaries did not report the correct age during the BDR exercise or totally refused to register because they did not know why the exercise was being conducted. As a result, these missed out on benefiting from the program especially for the VFG households. This has made people more responsive to registration.

There is no single age verification tool can efficiently be used to guide the selection process with no loopholes.

SAGE previously used LCI identity cards, baptism certificates, marriage certificates as means of verifying identity and age of beneficiaries. These were however noted to have loopholes related to forging them, thus proving unreliable. During a the retargeting exercise, the program had expected to use information related to the national identity card registration to verify new applicants to be considered for the SAGE Senior Citizens Grant in 2015. However, it was noted that incorrect age was declared by some individuals in areas where the Senior Citizens Grant is implemented. Many of the infirm were also reported not to have registered thus not likely to have the identity cards, rendering the national identity cards unreliable. The program therefore used other sources of information to confirm eligibility in all the sub-counties.

Having a designated system developer eases implementation, modification and continuity of the MIS system as opposed to making new procurements every time there is need. Since the system developer has worked with the program since inception, it becomes easy to identify gaps, continuously making improvements, innovations, and changes in data extraction and management. This further ensures data security.

Having a robust MIS system enhances accountability at the individual, district and programme levels, hence the importance of emphasising it.

Until April 2015, Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment Programme for the Elderly (SAGE) beneficiary records were kept in hard copy, managed and stored at the district

level. Due to the importance of records in providing evidence for implementation, accountability and supporting future activities, a more systematic way of managing records has been introduced. As a result, all SAGE beneficiaries' records have been retrieved and stored in soft and hard copies. Officers involved in the process have also ensured proper collection, filing and presentation of all documentation used since the ESP inception in the districts.

Procurement of project equipment to support field operations requires a prior assessment and understanding of the environment and terrain being planned for.

Much as the motorcycles (Honda XR 125L) were initially acknowledged as unique, very good and durable by all district teams, they were afterwards reported to be very expensive to maintain, with limited spare parts at local level. This led to costly replacement as spares are only available in major towns or Kampala where the major supplier is. They were also noted to be more suitable for tarmac and not marram upcountry roads and terrain. It is therefore important to conduct research and consultations with other upcountry implementers to get advice on the best and most suitable type of motorcycle for upcountry use.

Encouraging local innovations by field teams increases efficiency in program implementation. Kyankwanzi and Kiboga districts innovated the use of the pay slips to track beneficiary payment and this has reduced complaints and confusion at the pay point. Each beneficiary has a pay slip that is kept by the parish chief. On the pay day, beneficiaries receive their pay slips from the parish chief which they present together with the Simcard and identification documents. On receiving the payment, the beneficiaries sign both the payroll and pay slip. This has greatly helped in tracking beneficiary monthly payments, reduced the risk of fraud especially for beneficiaries who keep their money on the card, strengthened parish chiefs' involvement and knowledge of beneficiaries as well as enabling record keeping at lower levels. The pay slips can be adopted in the rollout to help beneficiaries track their payments but also confirm the amount withdrawn.

2.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

Spending patterns and areas of spending of the cash transfer grant are strongly influenced by the historical background and environment in which beneficiaries live.

The broad areas of spending, for example, are: food, groceries, assets, income-generating activities, joining revolving groups, services and household items. Priorities at individual, household and community levels are, however, determined by circumstances. It was also noted that in Bufunjo sub-county in Kyenjojo district, beneficiaries are spending much of their money in savings and revolving groups from which they get money to invest in agriculture and buying livestock. On the other hand, beneficiaries in Nyantungo mostly spend their money on buying food and groceries. In this case, their priorities are influenced by their historical background. Majority of beneficiaries in Bufunjo formerly lived in small and hilly areas requiring hard work and maximisation of available space; This is different from the Batooro who are inhabitants of the place and used to peaceful living.

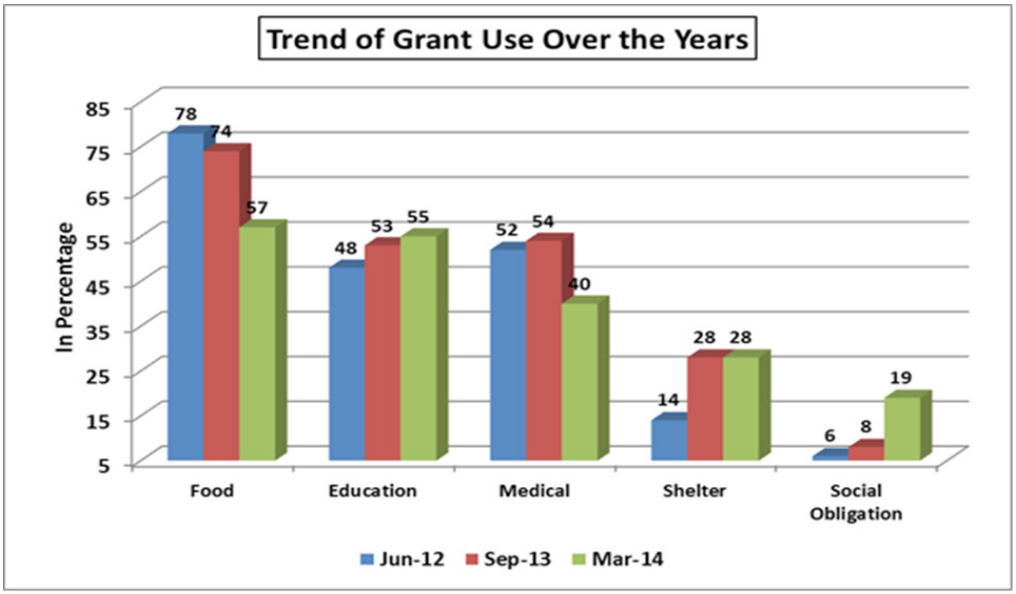
Instituting beneficiary transaction audits and strict observation of programme guidelines has led to improved service delivery to beneficiaries.

A high percentage of beneficiaries now receive their grants payments within the stipulated time (8:00 am to 5:00pm), permitting beneficiaries to start their journey home early enough. Consistent monitoring of payments through transaction audits and requiring programme field teams to explain deviation from guidelines, especially where payments are made outside schedules, has led to improved compliance among SAGE field teams with the requirement for them to seek formal authorization to undertake payments outside the normal schedules (hours/days).

As the following graph demonstrates, Regularity and consistency in the SAGE grant distribution has led to a change in prioritization of expenditures among beneficiaries over the years.

Results of the client exit surveys conducted over the period 2012-2014 show a reduction in expenditure on food from 78%, 74% to 57% respectively. This indicates that beneficiaries have food from their gardens hence the reduction spending on food. Expenditure on education and social obligations has increased, signalling the importance beneficiaries attach to investment in education. Increased expenditure on social obligations indicates recognition and enhancing their status in society thus

building their confidence and self-esteem. The reduced expenditure on medical care in 2014 could be an indicator of improved health resulting from improved feeding. Expenditure on shelter increased after 2012 and is now stable.



The SAGE cash transfer has not displaced formal support from other sources for either SCG or VFSG beneficiaries.

Some of the previous studies indicated that beneficiary care takers, family members and community members were happy with the SAGE program for relieving them of the financial care to the elderly in their homes or neighbourhoods. This raised fear among some policy makers that SAGE would displace support that was provided for these people. Findings from the midline evaluation research, however, found that SAGE had a significant positive impact on SCG recipients' integration into community-based reciprocal support mechanisms, with a positive impact particularly with regard to their receipt of support from other households. Conversely, in VFSG areas SAGE was found to have had a significant impact on beneficiaries' support provided to other households. This different outcome for VFSG households may partly be explained by inter-household tensions caused by the VFSG targeting. VFSG beneficiaries may have felt obligated to, or pressured by, other members of the community to share SAGE resources that were not perceived as fully deserved. In SCG communities, by contrast, the cash transfer is often reported to have contributed to inter-household harmony.

In addition to enabling the elderly to enjoy a more dignified life, SAGE enables beneficiaries receive decent care during their last days and a decent burial after their deaths through the use of the transitional grant.

A study conducted by ESPP on use of the transitional grant revealed that even where beneficiaries may had no relatives, friends, neighbours and local leaders were happy to ensure beneficiaries received decent burial treatment and in case of death before payment is made, the transitional grant was used to pay the debt incurred. The same study showed that most beneficiaries had been able to receive a decent burial with their graves well-built or completed after the transitional grant was paid. In Karamoja, where an animal must be slaughtered at the funeral, people were reported to slaughter 92.1animals bought on credit and paid back after receiving the SAGE transitional grant. Nebbi district had the highest number of responses from households that used the transitional grant for completing graves.

Despite the low literacy levels of SAGE beneficiaries, a large number of beneficiaries have high numeracy skills.

Findings from the Literacy, numeracy, eye sight and memory survey conducted by ESPP indicated that 48.9% of the 2,748 beneficiaries who participated in the survey had not had any education, whilst 28.7% had attained lower primary education. Despite this, a large number of beneficiaries seem to have high numeracy levels. In fact, 92.1% of the surveyed beneficiaries reported counting and confirming their grant payment before leaving the pay point. This can be partly attributed to functional adult literacy programmes existing in the districts as well as to the motivation of receiving money.

Empowering beneficiaries and ensuring they have full knowledge of their grant entitlements per payment cycle reduces the risk to being defrauded.

Findings from the above survey indicate that 92.2% of surveyed beneficiaries were fully aware of their monthly entitlements. A total of 84.8% of surveyed beneficiaries reported knowing how much they usually received at each payment cycle. In case of receiving a less-than expected transfer, they also reported to be able to ask agents for the right amount. This corroborates the findings of the Beneficiary Transaction audits. These found that many sampled beneficiaries that received multiple transactions in one payment were able to realise they were being transferred less-than-what they were entitled to and reported so to the agents.

Livestock is a major investment among SAGE grant beneficiaries.

Evidence from the SAGE impact evaluation and studies conducted revealed that most beneficiaries (both men and women) either save their money to buy livestock or keep their savings in the livestock. Most commonly reported animals include chicken, goats, pigs and cattle. This was mainly attributed to affordability (given the range and varying costs) easy to look after, can easily multiply, can easily be sold off to meet other needs, provide products for sale and food (e.g eggs, milk, manure) can be used for social and cultural functions. Results of the qualitative midline survey indicated that livestock was an important source of investment for economic and cultural reasons. This was reiterated at end line impact evaluation, where findings indicated that livestock was the second major area of investment after food for both SCG and VFG households. Similarly the client exit survey data indicated that the highest form of saving was in livestock with 44% of beneficiaries, while 18% of beneficiaries save to buy livestock, which was second to food. The lesson from this is the value attached to livestock irrespective and its multi-purpose use and potential to easily turn it into liquid cash.

2.5 Program Management and Institutional Arrangements

Relationship building is a key element in institutional development strategies.

ESP has been built through the development and building of partnerships between ministries and other stakeholders. Without deepened relationships, shared and common understanding can hardly be achieved; neither can one understand the ideas and fears of other departments, ministries or institutions, thus leading to rejection or delays to buy in or approve. Some institutional development strategies can only be implemented after consensus has been built in the different partners and at different political and technical levels. Deepened relationships can be achieved through numerous formal and informal meetings to listen and understand other people's views, address their concerns or calm down their fears at all levels. The challenge of public service culture where seniority prevents/limits juniors from freely interacting with seniors in formal meetings means that engaging only the topmost political and technical leadership is not the most efficacious approach.

Change in both technical and political heads of a government department/ministry leads to setbacks in some programme processes .

Technical and political leadership of the MGLSD changed with the appointment of a new Cabinet Minister and Permanent Secretary. While on one level this has slowed the institutional development work stream (as it requires buy-in and approval at the most senior levels), this slowdown was also minimized due to the fact that other technical officers in the MGLSD had engaged on these issues in the past – including participating in study tours and overseeing analytical work such as the institutional capacity assessment. The lesson here is that there is always a risk of changes in personnel at senior levels and that, while engagement with the most senior officials is critical from a decision-making perspective, a lower level engagement with more junior officials and middle-level managers can help maintain strategic continuity when such changes occur.

Provision of constructive and consistent information on planned institutional arrangements is important in reducing staff anxiety about the programme and their future as well as loss of experienced staff.

In respect to the ESP Management Agent's contract that was due to expire in December 2015, there was need for the MGLSD to establish a new arrangement to focus on initiating, promoting and overseeing implementation of social protection programmes specifically SAGE. In March 2014, the

Steering Committee made several decisions in respect of the institutional arrangements for the ESPP II and transition plan. These included the establishment of a Programme Management Unit to coordinate implementation of the National Social Protection Policy and phase II of ESP. Decisions on how the transition would be implemented, however, took long yet no official communication was made, causing staff tension and anxiety to look for jobs. This was likely to affect the program especially if experienced staff were lost and money for rolling out the program was released. Creating the future of programs is therefore important to reduce staff anxiety.

In conclusion, a close scrutiny of the journey of the Expanding Social Protection Programme reveals important lessons regarding popularising and steering a new idea

among a wide range of actors. There are lessons on how to package the message, who to approach over what, where to best-find them and how best to pitch, as well as which actors can play which role in a bid to help a little-known idea gain foothold.

ESPP's experience also offers lessons on how to champion the development of a well-understood and widely accepted national policy, with the core lessons being the importance of consultation and the widest possible consensus

It is important that new programmes do everything possible to ensure that besides engaging technical and other leaders, the general public is not left out, and is informed of developments and changes in the programme. A buy-in at the grassroots can go a long way to pushing an initiative, even in the face of elite skepticism.

Finally, ESPP shows that once the highest level of technical competences are deployed in terms of programme conception and design, and once the political and civil leadership have bought into an initiative, what is needed for success is concerted, coherent and consistent public communication.

Of all the Government of Uganda initiatives, Direct Income Support under the Expanding Social Protection Programme can be rightly said to be among the most ambitious and noble schemes. At a time when states were emphasizing that the economy should be private sector-driven and firms and families should play a bigger role in affording common social services, the Uganda government mooted the idea of Social Protection. Among other initiatives, this included the senior citizens grant (SCG), where selected elderly people were paid unconditional money by the government.

However, although ESPP schemes are noble in nature, they did not get unanimous support. Rather they were opposed, criticised, even ridiculed. Still, thanks to determination by the government, the SAGE schemes have emerged in great light, with some beneficiaries and program implementers describing the grants as one of the best ever government programmes.

At the commencement of the program, there was an intention to document the lessons generated from the design through the evaluation to inform the rollout as well as the design and implementation of similar programs here and elsewhere.

This booklet summarises the lessons compiled from ESPP1 processes that government units and other organisations can learn from the experiences of ESPP 1 in delivering DIS. Well used, these lessons can help many an organisation embarking on a new programme in the Ugandan context.

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