



ESP II Baseline National Bellwether Findings

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Contents

Contents.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Acronyms	iv
Executive Summary.....	v
Baseline Bellwether Report	1
1 Introduction	1
2 The Bellwether Methodology	2
3 The Application of the Bellwether Methodology	3
4 Results	4
Where are the issues of NSPP and SCG on the policy agenda?	5
How do influential bellwether informants talk and think about the SCG and NSPP?	5
Political Will.....	7
How likely is the state to extend provision?.....	8
Effectiveness of ESP communication messages.....	9
Awareness of SP issues in the policy arena	10
5 Conclusions	10
6 Meta Analysis of Baseline Data.....	12
7 Recommendations	12
References	14
Annexe 1: Semi-structured Interview Schedule	15
Annexe 2: Bellwether Informants	16
Annexe 3: Terms of Reference.....	17

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Acronyms

DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
EA	Evaluability Assessment
ESP	Expanding Social Protection
MoGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
MoFPED	Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development
NSPP	National Social Protection Policy
OWC	Operation Wealth Creation
PMR	Policymaker Rating
PMU	Programme Management Unit
PS	Permanent Secretary
RCT	Randomised Controlled Trial
SAGE	Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment
SCG	Senior Citizens' Grant
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
YLP	Youth Livelihoods Programme

Executive Summary

The document sets out the process and findings of a baseline study, which forms one component of the *Political Will and Support for Social Protection in Uganda* evaluation initiative, along with a companion Policymaker Rating (PMR) exercise, to assess the impact of the second phase of the DFID-funded Expanding Social Protection programme (ESP II) (2016-2020) on attitudes to social protection provision in Uganda over time.

Using the innovative ‘bellwether’ approach, developed by the Harvard Family Research Project in the US in the 2000s, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eighteen influential and well informed national actors (bellwethers), with the aim of understanding attitudes to the Senior Citizens’ Grant (SCG), which was introduced and financed with support from DFID, and the extent to which the issue of social protection has entered the national discourse. Informants were drawn from seven different sectors namely; politics, the civil service, the media, civil society, the donor community, academia and the faith communities and included senior figures who were not involved in social protection as well as some who were directly engaged. The approach explored the broader policy narrative, as well as;

gauging the position of social protection on Uganda’s policy agenda in relation to competing social development objectives and policy priorities,

ascertaining the level of awareness, knowledge and support (or lack thereof and or opposition) to social protection among the selected policymakers, and

assessing the likelihood of policymakers to support implementation of the provisions in the National Social Protection Policy.

The findings of the bellwether process are presented under six headings, adapted from the ESP II advocacy strategy.

SCG in the national policy agenda

In terms of its location within the national policy agenda the SCG is not perceived as an important or mainstream intervention, and was consistently identified as being of lower priority than other national interventions to address poverty, namely the government’s ‘Operation Wealth Creation’ (OWC), the MoGLSD’s ‘Youth Livelihood Programme’ (YLP) and the Women’s Entrepreneurship Fund, which have significantly greater budget allocations from the fiscus, and political significance.

Perception of the SCG

Among the informants, the SCG was generally supported as a good thing in principle, and something which it was legitimate for the state to provide. There was widespread agreement that it was appropriate to support the elderly poor, with justification for this position being their need for such assistance on the one hand, and reciprocity on the other, with the state being identified as having an obligation to support those who had contributed to its growth. The implementation of the SCG was

noted to be significantly superior to other anti-poverty programmes, with fewer opportunities for corruption or diversion of funds, and with transparent systems in place to ensure that resources reach the intended beneficiaries in full, and a higher degree of monitoring and accountability than other programmes. This was linked to a perception that it was ‘not really a government programme’, but *de facto* a donor programme, and cash transfers themselves were perceived to be part of an externally promoted agenda.

Some informants however perceived the programme as politicised in terms of both beneficiary and district selection practices. And overall, concern was articulated that politicisation was likely to be the outcome of the programme’s extension in line with the national implementation plan, as rationed access to the programme by districts and recipients would undermine transparency in targeting, increasing the likelihood of corruption.

Affordability was also identified as a major constraint. This was because of other priorities competing for budgetary support in terms of public goods (basic services), political priorities (growth promotion through infrastructure investment), and regime maintenance (spending on forces of law and order, constitutional amendments and initiatives to support potential destabilising elements including the youth). As such, while informants supported extended SCG provision in principle, given the anticipation that funding for universal implementation would be unlikely, they did not endorse extended provision.

Political will

Informants identified a lack of political will to promote extended SCG provision, with the political agenda and discourse having switched from investment in the social sectors, including poverty relief, to growth promotion via investment in the productive sectors and infrastructure as exemplified in the current National Development Plan.

Extended provision

It was not considered likely that the programme would be fully funded by the government in the near future, given competing demands for budget allocations for alternative programmes which are greater political priorities and cuts to other social sector budgets. The partial disbursement of government commitments to donor co-funded initiatives was perceived to be commonplace, and not unique to the SCG. There was however a perception that the programme was likely to continue with existing levels of government funding in the short term, irrespective of donor financing decisions due to its popularity with MPs and potential and actual recipients of the SCG as well as passive support from the President, which makes the programme important symbolically, even if its social protection functionality is compromised.

A change in attitude and the level of support for the programme from the President was identified as the necessary prerequisite for full implementation, but this was not considered to be likely in the near future, given the President’s preoccupation with investing in domains that are likely to generate or promote economic growth.

ESP communication

The interviews indicated that there is widespread knowledge of the Senior Citizens' Grant, including its objectives, along with details such as its targeting criteria, geographical coverage and the value of the transfer, despite its partial geographical coverage to date. This generalised familiarity with the SCG is indicative of successful communication around the programme.

Awareness of social protection

Awareness of social protection more generally and the range of issues articulated in the National Social Protection Policy such as health or social insurance, social care, or extended cash transfer provision was found to be limited and the interview responses suggested that social protection as a concept has not taken root within the national policy discourse.

Conclusion

The key challenge which emerged from the study was the lack of policy champions for the NSPP in general and SCG in particular, within the three key institutional groupings which are core to financing and implementation; the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, and the Development Partners. Also of note was the reported political ambivalence towards the programme, with MPs' support perceived to be instrumental and linked to the extension of political patronage, rather than a commitment to the provision of social protection and the President identified as providing only passive support to the programme.

Recommendations

The bellwether approach was found to be an effective means to provide insights into programme performance and the findings provide an adequate baseline for the assessment of the efficacy of ongoing ESP II advocacy. As such the exercise should be repeated prior to the completion of the second phase of the programme, in order to assess ESP II performance in line with the programme log frame indicator relating to political will and support.

The study has the potential to play a formative role as the findings confirm the critical importance of active advocacy engagement, and suggest that a refinement of the advocacy engagement strategy may be appropriate. This should include;

- increased advocacy targeted at the MoGLSD and Donor Partner institutions, to promote institutional policy championship and a consistent donor voice,

- strategic engagement with senior political figures to promote and embed the NSPP, and

- refocusing advocacy targeted at MPs on the promotion of the SCG and NSPP as part of the development of social protection provision, rather than the extension of SCG provision.

Baseline Bellwether Report

1 Introduction

The document sets out the process and findings of a bellwether study, carried out in Kampala, which forms one component of the *Political Will and Support for Social Protection in Uganda* evaluation initiative, established to create a baseline for assessing the impact of the second phase of the DFID-funded Expanding Social Protection programme (ESP II) on attitudes to social protection provision in Uganda over time. This national bellwether report is complemented by both a district level bellwether study, and a baseline Policymaker Rating (PMR) study.¹

Box 1: ESPII

The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) of Uganda, in partnership with the UK Department for International Development and Irish Aid, is implementing Phase two (ESPII) of the Expanding Social Protection (ESP) Programme. The goal of ESP is to reduce chronic poverty and improve life chances for poor men, women and children in Uganda. The programme aims to embed a national social protection system, including social assistance for the poorest and most vulnerable, as a core element of Uganda's national planning and budgeting processes.

Phase one of the programme (ESPI) implemented between 2010 and June 2016 was designed around two components: a) policy support focusing on strengthening leadership on social protection across government, developing a national social protection strategic and fiscal framework, generating evidence on the impacts of social protection, and building government commitment and investment in social protection; and b) the implementation of a direct income support pilot (Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment – SAGE). ESPI was successful in its objectives, and resulted in Cabinet approval of the National Social Protection Policy (NSPP) in 2015, providing a policy mandate for further interventions in social protection, and establishment of a Programme Management Unit (PMU) under MoGLSD to manage the SCG and possible new direct income support initiatives, as well as provide a research and coordination function for cross-governmental social protection interventions. During ESPI the SAGE pilot tested a range of implementation modalities for an efficient, cost effective and scalable social transfer, and the Government of Uganda (GoU) and the Development Partners (DPs) have negotiated a second phase, ESPII running from 2015 to 2020 with the goal of achieving a sustainable social protection system which is institutionalised, financed (with an increasing proportion coming from Uganda's own growing tax base) and reaching beneficiaries across the entire country.

The specific objectives of ESPII are summarised in the following 4 outputs: i) MoGLSD capacity strengthened to lead on social protection, ii) Sustainable and accountable system for cash transfer delivery established at national scale, iii) Senior Citizens' Grant (and other vulnerable groups' grants) delivering regular and reliable payments to beneficiaries across the entire country and iv) increased public understanding of, and demand for, an accountable social protection system.

Source: Adapted from PMU, 2017 (TOR)

¹ For more details of the three components and overall methodology see the inception report for the *Political Will and Support for Social Protection in Uganda* research project.

The bellwether study was carried out in order to gather information to serve as a baseline against which changes in public understanding and demand can be measured. Using a bellwether methodology, interviews were conducted with a sample of influential national actors from a variety of sectors, with the aim of understanding the extent to which the issue of social protection has entered the national discourse. The approach also provides insights into the broader policy narrative, with the specific aim of;

gauging the position of social protection on Uganda's policy agenda in relation to competing social development objectives and policy priorities,

ascertaining the level of awareness, knowledge and support (or lack thereof and or opposition) to social protection among the selected policymakers, and

assessing the likelihood of policymakers to support implementation of the provisions in the National Social Protection Policy (NSPP).

The study assessed knowledge of and support for the SCG and NSPP among informants, and ascertained their perceptions of overall support for the programme, as well as the likelihood of political support for national roll-out according to the ESP II implementation plan. In addition to providing a valuable external perspective on attitudes to social protection among influential actors, the findings may be used as a baseline against which to assess the effectiveness of the ESP II programme's policy support and advocacy work during the programme period, in line with the fourth output '*Increased public understanding of, and demand for, an accountable social protection system*'.

The bellwether approach was adopted following recommendations set out in the 2016 evaluability assessment which informed the programme's Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy and Plan, and was carried out jointly by an international consultant and a national consultant.

2 The Bellwether Methodology

The bellwether methodology entails the administration of multiple semi-structured interviews with influential thought leaders ('bellwethers') and political insiders engaged in the national policy debate in order to gain an overview of attitudes to specific policy issues. Most of the bellwether sample do not have a direct connection to the specific policy issue of interest, and interview is framed in terms of the broader policy agenda, rather than explicitly focusing on the issue of interest, to avoid bias in responses. This technique enables insights into where a policy issue is positioned on the policy agenda; how decision makers and other influential actors are thinking and talking about it; and how likely policymakers are to act on it.

The bellwether approach (and also the PMR methodology) was developed by the Harvard Family Research Project in the US in the 2000s (see Blair, 2007 and Coffman and Reed, 2009), and has since

then been used in the US to evaluate advocacy efforts. Its use in relation to social protection is innovative, but it has recently been successfully applied to explore the political economy context of a number of development interventions internationally and the extent to which donor led policy engagement has contributed to policy debate and policy change (see for example McCord, Yablonski and Winder Rossi, 2016 relating to the policy influence of UNICEF in East Africa, and McCord, Heinneman and Phillips, forthcoming, relating to IFAD policy influence in South East Asia). It has recently been identified by DFID as a useful complement to the quantitative methods, primarily quasi Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs), widely used for evaluating social protection programme performance, as it extends the scope of appraisal into the domain of policy impact, ownership and sustainability.

3 The Application of the Bellwether Methodology

At the start of ESP II the PMU commissioned an evaluability assessment (EA) to inform the design of ESP II evaluation approach and methods. The EA recommended that the programme adopt PMR and bellwether techniques to measure the indicator "Perceived levels of political will and support for SP (gender disaggregated) among NSPP coordination committee members and other key stakeholders" under ESP II's Output 4: Increased public understanding and demand for an accountable social protection system. The suggestion to use these innovative techniques was informed in part by a desire to adopt approaches that are relatively lightweight so they do not overburden the limited administrative capacity available in the PMU.

Both methods were specifically designed to track political will and support and therefore were well suited to the measurement of this indicator, although given the nature of the approaches, gender disaggregated analysis was not an option in either case. It should be noted that the choice of this bellwether approach means that the extent to which the topic has entered the national policy discourse can be examined, rather than the extent to which there is generalized 'public' understanding and demand for an accountable social protection system.

In order to inform progress against the political will indicator, the bellwether approach was therefore used to gather data on how effective the ESP has been in communicating its key messages and whether it is successful in increasing awareness of social protection within the development narrative, and the importance of social protection issues in the political arena. The findings presented here form a baseline and the intention is for the methodology to be repeated over time (during the final stages of the programme) to identify changes in political will over time.²

Interviews took place with eighteen influential and well informed 'bellwethers', drawn from across society in order to explore perceptions of social protection outside the community directly engaged in its promotion and collaboration with the donor community, as well as those directly engaged. Six

² The sample of bellwethers will be constructed in the same way each time, drawn from across the same seven sectors, but the individuals in the sample may be different.

of the 18 were directly engaged in the NSPP. The informants were drawn from seven different sectors namely; politics, the civil service, the media, civil society, the donor community, academia and the faith communities. These individuals were selected by the national and international researchers, based on the criteria of being recognised as senior within their sector, well informed regarding the national policy discourse and with insights into the political economy of policy and decision making in the Ugandan context. Twenty-one individuals were initially invited to participate, with the objective of having a minimum of three informants per sector, but three were not available during the interview period. Informants were contacted by the national researcher and invited to participate in an interview on anti-poverty policy in Uganda, without any more detail being given regarding the objectives or financing of the study. The study was carried out in Kampala between the 22 and 31 January 2018 by a well-known and respected national consultant with expertise in political economy and social protection, and an international consultant with expertise in social protection, political economy and qualitative research techniques. The researchers presented themselves as independent researchers not affiliated to any particular donor or initiative.

The interviews explored how the SCG and the NSPP were positioned in the policy agenda; how decision-makers and other influential figures are thinking and talking about them; and how likely policymakers were to fully implement the SCG. The interviews took the form of a series of open-ended questions relating to the anti-poverty discourse in Uganda, and neither prior to or during the interview was the SCG or NSPP identified by the interviewer as the issue of primary interest. Also, it was not revealed to interviewees that the PMU and DFID had commissioned the study, in order to limit any bias in the response regarding the status of the SCG which might result from donor association. The interviewees were invited to share their opinions for a general review of anti-poverty interventions, and were informed that it was funded by DFID if asked. As the national researcher was a well-known and respected political journalist, informants were willing to share their opinions without further elaboration of the purpose of the interview. The questions asked explored the broader policy context and prompted a wide-ranging discussion within which information regarding the place of social protection was able to emerge. If the SCG was not mentioned spontaneously by the interviewee, the interviewers prompted the interviewee, only after responses to the question had been noted. In this way, interviewer interest in the SCG and NSPP did not bias responses or lead to an overstatement of the importance of these issues in the broader anti-poverty policy debate or broader political narrative. The interview took the form of a wide ranging exploration of policy interventions and their political context, from which the researchers extracted the information relevant to the study. The interviewees were informed that their responses would not be attributed and that they would be included in an anonymised way in this report in order to encourage open and frank discussion.

4 Results

The results of the bellwether process are set out below, summarised under six headings, adapted from the ESP II advocacy strategy;

Where is the issue of NSPP and SCG on policy agenda?

How do influential bellwether informants talk and think about the SCG and NSPP?

Political Will - how do decision makers talk and think about the SCG and NSPP?

How likely is the state to SCG extend provision?

What is the effectiveness of ESP communication messages?

What is the awareness of SP issues in the policy arena?

Overall there was significant consistency among the eighteen informants in terms of their knowledge of SCG and the NSPP, and attitudes to the desirability of extended provision. There was also considerable consistency in informants' perceptions of political will in relation to social protection overall, their identification of the key proponents and opponents of provision and the rationales underlying these positions, their analysis of political will, and of future prospects for extended provision. Where there were significant deviations from the main findings, these have also been noted. The key insights derived from the interviews are summarised below, and anonymised quotes from the informants have been added to illustrate these insights.

Where are the issues of NSPP and SCG on the policy agenda?

The SCG and the range of interventions outlined in the NSPP are low on the President's list of priorities and, consequently, equally low on the government's policy agenda. The dominant political priority is the promotion of the productive sector and economic growth, with a key secondary objective being power retention by both President Museveni and the National Resistance Movement, and as currently conceptualised the SCG does not fit within this set of policy priorities.

'He [the President] will not buy it as a rights issue. There is a need to sell it as a growth issue – there is evidence [of this], the evidence is there'.

As such, the SCG is not perceived as an important or mainstream intervention, and was consistently identified as being of low priority compared to other government interventions to address poverty, namely the 'Operation Wealth Creation' (OWC), the MoGLSD's 'Youth Livelihood Programme' (YLP) and the Women's Entrepreneurship Fund, which have significantly greater budget allocations from the fiscus, and political significance.

How do influential bellwether informants talk and think about the SCG and NSPP?

Among the informants, the SCG was generally supported as a good thing in principle, and something which it was legitimate for the state to provide. There was widespread, although not universal, agreement that it was appropriate to support the elderly poor, with justification for this position being their need for such assistance on the one hand, and reciprocity on the other, with the state being identified as having an obligation to support those who had contributed to its growth.

There was little mention of cash transfers inducing dependency or laziness, although one respondent argued;

'I for one don't support it [the SCG], I don't want to end up with a population which is dependent – currently Uganda has the highest dependency in the world – a government's job is not to take care of the welfare of its people, I'd rather it used the resources to set up a system whereby each household can take care of itself.'

The implementation of the SCG was noted to be significantly superior to other anti-poverty programmes, with fewer opportunities for corruption or diversion of funds, and with transparent systems in place to ensure that resources reach the intended beneficiaries in full, and a higher degree of monitoring and accountability than other programmes.

'Cash transfers are one way of redistributing wealth where corruption and tracking resources are tricky and state capture is infused in policy processes'.

Some informants argued that it was 'not really a government programme', but de facto a donor programme, and that this was what had led to superior implementation and accountability. Cash transfers themselves were perceived to be part of an externally promoted agenda.

Some informants, perhaps influenced by the politicisation of many government anti-poverty initiatives, perceived the programme as politicised in terms of both beneficiary and district selection practices. And overall, concern was articulated that politicisation was likely to be the outcome of the programme's extension in line with the national implementation plan, as rationed access to the programme by districts and recipients would undermine transparency in targeting, increasing the likelihood of corruption.

'Ugandans are not blind; they keep quiet but of course they see it [politicisation in the selection of districts for receipt of the SCG]'.

Discussion of the pressure for national roll-out also revealed a prevailing perception that while MPs were actively promoting the programme, their support for programme extension was largely instrumental, relating to the search for sources of political capital, rather than in order to realise the principle of social protection provision.

The fact that MPs lobby hard for their districts and constituencies to be included, and are willing to accept significant programme dilution (suggesting a reduction in the scale of coverage in each constituency, increasing the age of eligibility, and/or reducing the value of the transfer) in order to extend geographical coverage was put forward by the bellwethers to support their assertion that the programme had become politicised. MPs were perceived as being willing to weaken the core function of the SCG if that was what it would take for the SCG to be extended into their constituencies. It was noted that extension into new areas, even if it lowered the numbers of beneficiaries in each constituency, and a movement away from universal coverage (as under ESPI) to rationed coverage, would increase potential for MPs to extract benefit from the programme, as it would enable them to take credit for the inclusion of their constituency in the programme. Rationed provision was identified as more susceptible to constituency level political manipulation than universal provision, as inclusion in the programme could be granted as a reward for political or other forms of support (bribes etc.) to Members of Parliament or local officials responsible for targeting, and as such, the informants did not endorse the idea of national roll-out unless provision was

universal in terms of i) constituency coverage and ii) provision for all those eligible without discretion or rationing.

'If the SCG is to be national it should be an entitlement, this is an issue of equity. It should not be selectively implemented – all have contributed'.

In addition to the concern that lower coverage levels would create an opening for further politicisation and reduce the social protection function of the programme, affordability was also identified as a major constraint. This was because of other priorities competing for budgetary support in terms of public goods (basic services), political priorities (growth promotion through infrastructure investment), and regime maintenance (spending on forces of law and order, constitutional amendments and initiatives to support potential destabilising elements including the youth).

'Pressure is already being felt on the fiscus – I don't see where the money will come from, and there is likely to be a contraction of a lot of social spending, as more will go to regime survival, massive expenditure on security around this issue [upcoming election and referendum on constitutional amendment]'.

Some informants, among them MoFPED officials, identified increased funding for basic service provision as a priority over social protection provision. They noted that contributory provision of social protection should be extended in place of rationed cash transfer provision.

While informants supported extended SCG provision in principle, given the anticipation that funding for universal implementation would be unlikely, they did not endorse extended provision.

Political Will

Informants identified a lack of political will to promote extended SCG provision, with the political agenda and discourse having switched from investment in the social sectors, including poverty relief, to growth promotion via investment in the productive sectors and infrastructure as exemplified in the current National Development Plan.

While MPs were identified as supporters, other key political figures were seen as opposed or as paying only lip service to social protection. In terms of civil servants there was agreement that there are no SCG or NSPP or policy champions outside the PMU, and that even senior figures within the MoGLSD were ambivalent champions whose real interest lay in promoting alternative programmes for budgetary support. Outside the MoGLSD no policy championship was identified among key institutions including the MoFPED and, with the exception of DFID and Irish Aid, the Development Partner community.

Technocrats within the MoFPED were identified as opponents of the SCG roll-out and extension of services under the NSPP. They were identified as being opposed to the idea of cash transfers in general and not only the SCG. This was not for ideological reasons, but primarily due to concerns regarding affordability in the context of slow growth and competing priorities, many of which enjoy stronger political backing.

Significant passive opposition to the SCG was identified among those who might be considered to be champions, within the MoGLSD and also the donor community, with evidence of a fragmentation of social sector lobbying in favour of alternative programming options. Within the MoGLSD, this included the Permanent Secretary (PS) and Ministers, who, while happy to accept the SCG, were at the same time associated with the promotion of initiatives that compete with the SCG for budgetary allocations (notably the Youth Livelihoods Programme, the Women's Entrepreneurship Fund, and the Child Grant, respectively). A similar ambivalence was also identified within the donor community, with different donors prioritising the implementation of alternative components of the NSPP, rather than jointly advocating for a sequenced implementation with the SCG as the initial intervention.

Subsequent to initial championship by DFID and Irish Aid, lobbying for the SCG has become one of multiple advocacy objectives put forward to the MoFPED by the MoGLSD and donor community. However, it enjoys limited leverage or policy championship outside the MP lobby, which is more focussed on extension than adequate funding to ensure adequate social protection provisioning. The consequence of competitor initiatives being promoted by DPs and the MoGLSD is a diluted message in terms of the importance of SCG funding, with advocacy around the SCG having lower priority than other MoGLSD initiatives which have greater political and donor support.

In this context support by MPs can highlight the profile of the SCG, but may be detrimental to efforts to secure adequate financing as it is instrumental rather than linked to the importance of equitable provision or promotion of the broader social protection concept. Informants perceived MPs as not being adequately nuanced for their messaging to be effective as advocates. Now that the policy is endorsed, their support may even be counterproductive should it lead to programme extension without adequate financing.

'Politicisation is bad but also the one thing that helps programmes to keep funding'.

Presidential support for the SCG and NSPP in general was also seen to be passive, in line with the broader strategy adopted with donor-funded social sector initiatives. It was felt unlikely that this support would extend to endorsing any significant increase in financial allocations, despite commitments in the MoU governing SCG implementation. Informants perceived the President's expression or show of support, as in the case of his recommendation that the project be extended to include Yumbe District among the pilots, as opportunistic and calculated to garner political capital rather as evidence of his commitment to the principle of social protection.

How likely is the state to extend provision?

It was not considered likely that increased funds to extend provision (as per the MoU) would be made available in the near future, given competing demands for budget allocations and supplementary budgets, and cuts to other social sector budgets. The existence of alternative programmes which are greater political priorities, as already indicated, explains the opposition to extension within MoFPED, particularly among key senior staff.

'It's not a top priority at the Ministry of Finance at the moment even though we have put some money into it, but not much.... actually, we put in money on the insistence of donors'.

There was a perception that the programme was likely to continue with existing levels of government funding in the short term, irrespective of donor financing decisions. It was felt that even if donors were to withdraw, the programme would be continued due to its popularity with MPs and potential and actual recipients of the SCG as well as the passive support the President has articulated. All of this makes it important symbolically. For the purposes of garnering political capital and keeping up the façade of a caring government, it was felt to be desirable to continue the programme with existing limited levels of government financing, albeit in name, even if its social protection functionality is compromised. In this way, advocacy by MPs and lip-service by the President is likely to promote the continued existence of the SCG as an idea, although it is unlikely to engender a roll-out which is consistent with programme objectives in terms of coverage, targeting and payment levels.

‘Government doesn’t have the money, it won’t take its own resources to extend the programme’.

A change in attitude and the level of support for the programme from the President was identified as the necessary prerequisite for full funding to be made available and the programme to be extended nationally. Without such a change, full implementation was not considered to be likely. And the change was seen as unlikely in the near future, given the President’s preoccupation with investing in domains that are likely to generate or promote economic growth.

‘Our resources are small and our priorities are different’.

‘Unless the donor is willing to put in more money, and I want to insist on this, the government has so many demands. I don’t think the government is willing to put in more money’.

‘[For expansion to take place] the attitude and perceptions of political leadership will have to change; the priority is resources allocated to productive sectors – argument is expansion of infrastructure, airports, factories. Social protection is not considered as investment but as expenditure. If is to change this would have to start with the President seeing social protection differently’.

Effectiveness of ESP communication messages

The interviews indicate that there is widespread knowledge of the Senior Citizens’ Grant, despite its limited geographical coverage to date. All informants were aware of the SCG, and its objectives, along with details such as its targeting criteria, geographical coverage and the value of the transfer. Opinion was divided about the value of the transfer. Some downplayed it as ‘too small’, while those who were familiar with life in the countryside expressed positive sentiments, seeing the transfer in terms of its purchasing power at village level where cash is generally scarce, and its enabling of the poor elderly to satisfy needs, such as for sugar or paraffin, which they would otherwise not be able to satisfy. The widespread familiarity with what the SCG is, to whom it goes and how much money is involved, is indicative of successful communication around the programme.

Awareness of SP issues in the policy arena

In terms of broader awareness of social protection and the range of issues articulated in the national social protection policy knowledge was found to be limited among some respondents and non-existent in others. Only a minority of informants mentioned the extension of health insurance or social insurance in the context of extending social protection provision. Also, the interview responses suggested that social protection as a concept has not taken root within the national policy discourse.

5 Conclusions

The position of social protection on Uganda's policy agenda is low in relation to competing social development objectives and policy priorities. The policy discourse is dominated by investment to stimulate growth rather than to reduce poverty. Inasmuch as poverty alleviation initiatives remain on the agenda, these are dominated by Operation Wealth Creation, the Women's Entrepreneurship Fund, and the Youth Livelihoods Programme. These have been initiated and developed internally within the government and are of such political importance as to enjoy high-level political support, courtesy of well-placed and motivated champions. By contrast social protection or the SCG is perceived as an externally-led agenda that is not yet rooted in the domestic policy discourse.

There is a high level of awareness, knowledge and support for the concept of the SCG in principle among bellwethers. This, however, does not translate into support for programme extension given their recognition of binding fiscal constraints and alternative policy priorities linked to growth and regime maintenance. These stand in the way of the programme being adequately funded and implemented.

'Without donors, not even SAGE [Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment, the DFID and Irish Aid supported cash transfer programme] would be implemented because of the demands we have and scarce resources [...] implementing it in its entirety means we would have to get resources from somewhere – should we stop the big projects?'

However, while there was a recognition that the government meeting its financial commitments in terms of the SCG was not likely and would represent a fundamental shift in government priorities, it was also noted that the SCG had created an opportunity to build a conversation about social protection which could not have happened in its absence. The process of institutionalising the gains from the donor's 'foot in the door strategy' of getting the SCG implemented under ESP I was perceived to have been less successful, focusing on implementation and neglecting the 'hearts and minds' advocacy component of the programme until ESP II.

There was a perception that the programme should only be implemented if it could be fully implemented in terms of provision in all constituencies, with inclusion based on conformity to eligibility criteria, rather than being rationed by politicians, which it was feared would lead to political manipulation of provision. Informants also identified the need for increased funding for

basic service delivery (health and universal primary education (UPE)) as a competing and arguably more important priority in terms of addressing core poverty needs.

'I would focus more on perfecting what we have already catered for, such as UPE, which is a form of support [...] why not put more cash there to improve quality? [...] why scatter resources and have little impact?'

'There are no resources adequate to meet our aspirations in terms of UPE and health'.

'[there is a] demand for UPE and health care – by the time you have met these needs, there is no money for the old, these are priorities'.

Overall it was felt that policymakers were unlikely to support implementation of the provisions in the NSPP, in terms of ensuring that the full funding committed under the MoU would be made available.

'[the government's] financing behaviour gives a clear message that it is not committed to the cash transfer component of NSPP'.

This situation, however, was not unique to the SCG. The same pattern of only partial disbursement of government commitments to donor co-funded initiatives was perceived to be commonplace. Respondents suggested that it was not generally anticipated within government that MOU co-funding commitments would be honoured in full.

In terms of institutional positioning, the key challenge which emerged from the study was the lack of policy champions for the NSPP in general and SCG in particular, within the three key institutional groupings which are core to financing and implementation; the MoGLSD, MoFPED and the Development Partners. The lack of harmonised support and advocacy for the promotion of the SCG within the donor community reported by the informants was notable, with different actors promoting individual institutional priorities rather than the sequenced implementation of the SCG and NSPP. Also of note was the reported high-level ambivalence towards the programme, with the President identified as at best a passive supporter of the programme. While MPs were identified as supporters, this support was felt to be instrumental and linked to the extension of political patronage, rather than a commitment to the provision of social protection. Also, it was perceived as potentially counterproductive in terms of promoting programme extension at the cost of programme quality. Even among Development Partners, the SCG was not identified as a priority issue for advocacy.

In a context of shrinking fiscal space and increasing demands for resources for regime maintenance, the scenario of limited policy championship outlined above results in a reluctance among technocrats in MoFPED to allocate the full government funding indicated in the MoU, or the significant additional funds that a national roll-out would require.

6 Meta Analysis of Baseline Data

This bellwether study was implemented in conjunction with a Policymaker Rating (PMR) study under the *Political Will and Support for Social Protection in Uganda* research project. Its objective was to use innovative qualitative approaches to develop baseline data for indicators on the effectiveness of the advocacy component of the ESPII.

The bellwether findings outlined above are consistent with those of the PMR. The latter found that only one quarter of the institutions and post-holders identified as critical for the expansion of the SCG were both supportive and influential, and that two thirds of the institutions and post-holders rated were not actively supportive of SCG expansion. However, the bellwether study revealed less evidence of policy championship even in key institutions and post-holders. The PMR assessors tended to ascribe a more positive rating of support to key institutions (DPs, MoGLSD) compared to the bellwether informants who were able to give a more nuanced analysis, based on their understanding of the wider context. They identified a more complex and fragmented set of attitudes which placed the SCG significantly lower in the policy hierarchy even within the institutions which were nominally supporting it.

The bellwether analysis also indicated that Presidential support was weaker than the PMR had suggested, and that without a shift in the Presidential position to active support for financing, the programme was unlikely to be rolled out as planned.

These differences indicate a consistent overestimation of support on the part of the assessors, compared to the bellwethers. This may be due to the preponderance of PMU staff among the assessors, who exhibited a positive bias and uncritical interpretation of the support offered to the programme by senior officials and politicians. This discrepancy is also consistent with the considerable uncertainty articulated by the assessors regarding the quality of their assessments.

7 Recommendations

The bellwether study has successfully provided a narrative response to the questions posed in the advocacy strategy relating to the position of the SCG and NSPP within the national discourse, which is summarised in section 5 above. This confirms that the approach is valid and can provide insights into programme performance. As such both the bellwether and PMR studies may be used as baselines, as anticipated, for the assessment of the efficacy of ongoing ESPII advocacy. As such the exercises should be repeated prior to the completion of the second phase of the programme, in order to assess ESPII performance in line with the programme log frame indicator relating to political will and support.

The study has the potential to play a formative role as the findings confirm the critical importance of active advocacy engagement, and suggest that a refinement of the advocacy engagement strategy may be appropriate.

The primary implication of the bellwether study findings is that if the SCG is to receive the funding and support required for roll-out in line with the ESP II strategy, there is a need for increased advocacy targeted at the MoGLSD and Donor Partner institutions, including UNICEF and the World Bank. This advocacy would promote institutional policy championship and a more strategic engagement to promote and embed the NSPP. This suggests that the PMU should consider the development and implementation of an internal advocacy process targeted at key MoGLSD personnel and also the DPs as a prerequisite for effective advocacy with key external institutions, including MoFPED. The PMU should also accommodate into their advocacy the insight that a greater degree of Presidential support is a precondition for significantly increased government resourcing.

The findings also indicate that ongoing advocacy targeted at MPs should be reviewed to ensure that it is resulting in the promotion of the SCG and NSPP as part of the development of social protection provision, rather than the extension of SCG provision, irrespective of its social protection function.

In addition, implementation of the PMR and bellwether processes, as well as the findings, highlighted the need for the PMU to take the lead in developing an active advocacy group to promote the SCG and also to enable strategic rather than *ad hoc* advocacy around the NSPP. This will prevent competing agency mandates fragmenting and weakening the social protection discourse. The process also indicated the need for the formation of advocacy communities around the other components of the NSPP (e.g. social and health insurance and other forms of cash transfer provision) by the PMU, both to promote the PMU's role in line with its extended mandate under ESPII, and also to enable harmonised and effective advocacy across the policy.

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Annexe 1: Semi-structured Interview Schedule

Informant:

Date:

1. What three issues are the most important antipoverty initiatives at the top of the national policy agenda?
 - *Invite them to name three in order of priority and tell you a little about each and why*
2. Have you heard about the NSPP and its implementation?
 - *what can they tell you about it and progress in implementation?*
 - *have they heard of it, how did they hear about it?*
 - *note if they can name any of the grants and know about their design and purpose*
 - If not, have you heard about cash transfers?
 - *what can they tell you about it and progress in implementation?*
 - *have they heard of them, how did they hear about them?*
 - If not, have you heard about SAGE or money for the elderly, or the proposed child grant?
 - *what can they tell you about it and progress in implementation?*
 - *have they heard of them, how did they hear about them?*
3. What individuals, constituencies, or groups do you see as the main advocates for realisation of the NSPP/grants?
 - *Omit if they haven't heard of the NSPP/grants at all*
 - *If they have try to explore what do you think their reasons for promoting these policies?*
4. Who do you see as the main opponents? Have you heard any one criticising or arguing against these interventions? Why do you think they do that?
 - *Omit if they haven't heard of the NSPP it at all*
 - *If they have try to explore what they think the motives and interests of the different opponents are*
5. What do you personally think about these things?
 - Considering the current social political and fiscal context, do you think the NSPP should be fully implemented now or in the near future? Why/why not?
6. Looking ahead, how likely do you think it is that NSPP will be fully implemented in the next 5 years? Why/why not?
7. If the NSPP is adopted, what issues do you think the state needs to be most concerned about related to its implementation?

Annexe 2: Bellwether Informants

Category		
Politicians	Opposition party leader and Cabinet member	2
Civil Servants	Senior civil servants from MofPED, MoGLSD and the PMU.	5
Media	Proprietor and Bureau Head national and regional newspapers	2
Civil Society (NGO)	National NGO representative and senior independent activists	3
Donor Partners	Senior DP actors working on Social Protection	3
Academics	Senior academics, Makerere University	2
Religious Agencies	Senior Interfaith Representative	1

Annexe 3: Terms of Reference

Project Title: Expanding Social Protection Uganda Phase II
Title: Social Protection Experts
Assignment: Baseline Study On Political Will and Support for Social Protection in Uganda
Inputs/Timeframe: 28 days (C1) – 31 days (C2); October / November 2017

Background to the Programme

The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) of Uganda, in partnership with the UK Department for International Development and Irish Aid, is implementing Phase two (ESP II) of the Expanding Social Protection (ESP) Programme. The goal of ESP is to reduce chronic poverty and improve life chances for poor men, women and children in Uganda. The programme aims to embed a national social protection system, including social assistance for the poorest and most vulnerable, as a core element of Uganda's national planning and budgeting processes.

Phase one of the programme (ESPI) implemented between 2010 and June 2016 was designed around two components: a) policy support focusing on strengthening leadership on social protection across government, developing a national social protection strategic and fiscal framework, generating evidence on the impacts of social protection, and building government commitment and investment in social protection; and b) the implementation of a direct income support pilot (Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment – SAGE). ESPI was successful in its objectives, and resulted in the following key achievements:

1. The National Social Protection Policy (NSPP) and a Programme Plan of Intervention (PPI) was approved by Cabinet in November 2015, providing a policy mandate for further interventions in social protection, and establishment of a Programme Management Unit (PMU) under MGLSD to manage the SCG and possible new direct income support initiatives, as well as provide a research and coordination function for cross-governmental social protection interventions.
2. The SAGE pilot tested a range of implementation modalities for an efficient, cost effective and scalable social transfer, generated evidence for national policy making and implementation. During the pilot phase, the Senior Citizens Grant (SCG) using age to determine eligibility has been implemented in 15 pilot districts. Following the end of the pilot, a decision was made to roll out the SCG in 40 new districts over the next ten years.

Following a successful of ESPI, Government of Uganda (GoU) and the Development Partners (DPs) have negotiated a second phase, running from July 2015 to June 2020. The purpose of ESP II is to achieve a sustainable social protection system which is institutionalised, financed (with an increasing proportion coming from Uganda's own growing tax base) and reaching beneficiaries across the entire country.

The specific objectives of ESP II are summarised in the following 4 outputs:

- **Output 1:** MGLSD capacity strengthened to lead on social protection.

- **Output 2:** Sustainable and accountable system for cash transfer delivery established at national scale.
- **Output 3:** Senior Citizens' Grant (and other vulnerable groups' grants) delivering regular and reliable payments to beneficiaries across the entire country.
- **Output 4:** Increased public understanding of, and demand for, an accountable social protection system.

The transition from the Social Protection Secretariat (established under the Directorate of Social Protection within MGLSD for ESPI) to the Programme Management Unit (PMU) took place between January and August 2016. This largely involved engagement of MGLSD-contracted staff responsible for the day-to-day management of the programme, and reflects a strategic transition from the pilot modality of ESPI towards a sustainable, Government-led national social protection system.

The NSPP articulates the vision and role of social protection and facilitates the development of a comprehensive national social protection system for Uganda built on two pillars, namely: social security, including direct income support, and social care and support services. Implementation of the NSPP and the PPI is a shared responsibility of GoU, the private sector and non-state actors. The roles of the various stakeholders shall vary according to their mandates and functions. The MGLSD shall lead on the implementation of direct income support programmes and delivery of social care and support services.

The national roll-out of the SCG to 40 districts over the next 10 years will make it the first government-financed social assistance scheme in the country. The roll-out plan under the ESPII period involves progressively expanding to new districts with GoU funding, as well as GoU taking over from DPs in funding of 14 pilot districts. There will also be modifications to the targeting modality, and a transition from a highly decentralised district-based delivery model to one based on seven Regional Technical Support Units (RTSUs) which will ensure centralised payments and minimised financial and fiduciary risks.

Maxwell Stamp PLC (MSP) was the Management Agent for the Development Partners on ESPI. MSP has now been engaged for ESPII to provide a range of support in the role of a Social Protection Fund Manager (SPFM) from 1 September 2016 to 30 June 2020 in association with Development Pathways. The core function of the SPFM is to provide technical assistance to the GoU (primarily the PMU established under MGLSD) to consolidate a national social protection system in Uganda. In addition, the SPFM will also manage DP financial contributions to the programme. The SPFM will provide good quality and timely technical assistance in support of the implementation of ESP II, provide both long and short term technical advisors, assist in the completion of programme deliverables, contract key service providers, and pre-finance the cash transfers on behalf of the DPs.

Background to the assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to measure the level of political will and support for social protection among key policy makers in Uganda. The study will use a combination of Bellwether and Policymaker Rating methodologies to establish a baseline for measuring and reporting³ on the effectiveness of the programme's policy support and advocacy work over the length of ESPII. This

³ Specific indicators and milestones are outlined in the ESPII logframe.

study draws from the recommendations in the evaluability assessment conducted in 2016 which informed the programme's Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy and Plan.

Scope of Work, Approach and Methodology

The focus of the study will be on measuring the levels of awareness, knowledge and support for a national social protection system [as defined in the National Social Protection Policy] among a purposefully selected group of policy makers.

The study will be jointly conducted by an international consultant with an in-depth understanding and experience in social protection and the application of the Bellwether and Policy maker ratings methodologies and a national consultant with a clear understanding of the development of social policy in Uganda and the national political context.

The consultants will work with the ESP Programme Management Unit and key Social Protection advocates to identify an initial sample of the key policy makers in Cabinet, Parliament and the civil service for the bellwether interviews and the policy maker ratings exercise. Some of the social protection advocates include members of the Social Development Sector Technical Working Group, ESP Steering Committee, Social Protection Thematic Committee, Uganda Social Protection Platform, Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Social Protection and the Local Development Partner Social Protection Working Group.

Policymaker ratings

It's desirable that the consultants adopt a participatory approach for maximising the potential for enhancing learning and the capacity of advocacy partners to effectively plan and execute their advocacy efforts. In particular reference to the policymaker rating exercise, the consultants will facilitate a workshop with selected SP advocates to:

- Support participants to develop clear advocacy objectives including the theory of change for social protection advocacy.
- Support participants to identify key policy makers to be targeted/rated and define criteria on which they will be rated.
- Generate a methodology and tools (including a rating scale) for measuring selected policymaker support and influence.
- Facilitate participants (using the methodology and tools defined above) to rate selected policy makers with the goal of ascertaining the individual policy makers'.
 - Level of knowledge for the national social protection system articulated in the National Social Protection Policy.
 - Level of influence within their domain including on key policy decisions related to approval and financing of the different components of the proposed social protection system.
 - Level of support for the national social protection system.
- Assess participants' level of confidence in the accuracy of the ratings assigned to the policy makers of interest.

- Discuss and advise/provide input into draft semi-structured format of bellwether interviews and informant selection.

Bellwether interviews

Using the Bellwether methodology, the consultants will also conduct interviews with a selected sample of influential policy makers (both at national and district level) with the aim of:

- gauging the position of social protection on Uganda's policy agenda in relation to competing social development objectives and policy priorities.
- ascertaining the level of awareness, knowledge and support (or lack thereof and or opposition) to social protection among the selected policy makers
- assessing the likelihood of the selected policymakers to support implementation of the provisions in the National Social Protection Policy

The consultants will analyse the data and prepare a baseline report on political support for social protection in Uganda including lessons learned and specific recommendations on approach, timing and frequency of follow up monitoring studies.

Outputs

- An inception report of no more than seven pages outlining the approach, methodology and tools for conducting the studies as well as a work-plan for the assignment, within 5 days of its commencement, to be agreed by the ESP PMU.
- A draft report of no more than 30 pages, excluding annexes. The annexes should include a record of consultations.
- Policy Maker Ratings workshop presentations
- Power point presentations for the workshop to discuss the preliminary findings with staff of the ESP-PMU and selected advocacy partners.
- A final report of no more than 30 pages, excluding annexes, incorporating reactions obtained from the data validation workshop.

Inputs

The consultants will spend a total of up to 25 days each on the research, which should encompass all tasks set out above, including report writing and participation in workshops as proposed in the input table below. A budget for up to 10-day inputs from a research assistant (s) which the national consultant will nominate may also be included in the consultant's proposal. The national consultant will manage the research assistant(s) including quality assuring all outputs and will be responsible for ensuring timely and quality delivery of the work.

Task	Days International Expert (of which in-country)	Days National Expert	Date
Review relevant documentation	2	2	TBC
Participate in inception meeting with ESP	0.5	0.5	TBC

	(0.5)		
Produce inception report, tools and work plan	2 (2)	2	TBC
Facilitate a policymaker ratings workshop	3 (3)	4	TBC
Conduct interviews with a range of senior policy actors and have a short debrief with ESP PMU on the study	11 (11)	13	TBC
Analyse the data	6	6	TBC
Prepare draft report on political support for social protection in Uganda including lessons learned and recommendations on timing and frequency of follow up monitoring.	2	2	TBC
Conduct validation meeting with ESP PMU and collect feedback	0.5	0.5	TBC
Finalise report	1	1	TBC
Total days	28 (16.5)	31	

ESP will arrange and pay for the costs of the policymaker rating workshop.

Management Arrangements

The Consultants will be contracted by Maxwell Stamp in London. The Consultant will report to the Policy and Advocacy Coordinator and will be accountable to the Team Leader and the Head of the PMU. The Policy and Advocacy Advisor will provide technical inputs and quality control to the work.

Confidentiality

All information provided during the course of conducting this assignment cannot be used for other purposes unless explicitly agreed to in writing by ESP PMU.

Minimum Qualifications of the International Consultant

- PhD in Social Policy or a related discipline.
- More than 10 years' experience in social protection for leading international academic, policy or advocacy organisations.
- Experience of research and analysis on Sub-Saharan social policy issues, political economy and drivers of change for social protection.
- Experience of conducting similar assignments for other social policy issues.

Minimum Qualifications of the National Consultant

- PhD in Political Science or a related discipline.
- More than 10 years' experience in political analysis for leading academic, policy or advocacy organisations in Uganda.
- Significant experience of research and analysis on Ugandan social policy issues and drivers of change for social policies.
- Demonstrated contacts at the most senior levels of government - reflected in the consultant's previous work experience.
- Able to demonstrate a wide network of contacts in fields relevant to the assignment.
- Experience of conducting similar work for other social policy issues.