



MINISTRY OF GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

**A REVIEW OF THE EXISTING SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES
FOR FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION SENSITIVITY AND THEIR
IMPACT ON MATERNAL AND CHILD NUTRITION OUTCOMES IN
THE WEST NILE REGION OF UGANDA**



June 2024



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



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**CHILD SENSITIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION (CSSP)
| REFUGEE HOSTING DISTRICTS OF WEST NILE |**



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MINISTRY OF GENDER, LABOUR
AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

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FOREWORD

The Government of Uganda through the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) with support from the United Nations World Food Programme (UNWFP) is implementing the Child Sensitive Social Protection (CSSP) Programme in the West Nile Region of Uganda. The overall objective of the CSSP programme is to achieve improved community and household resilience among refugees and host populations in refugee-hosting districts of West Nile to ensure improved child and maternal nutrition outcomes.

Uganda's population and the proportion of vulnerable individuals are on the rise, necessitating more targeted actions to reduce the vulnerabilities. The critical challenges the vulnerable persons face stem from income and food and nutrition insecurity, underscoring the importance of food security and nutrition in social protection programs. It is worth noting that nutrition-sensitive social protection programs have the potential to not only reduce poverty, but also enhance food security and positively impact child growth and maternal outcomes. To understand the extent to which existing social protection programmes are sensitive to food security and nutrition, the Ministry commissioned a study called "*A Review of the Existing Social Protection Sector-specific Instruments for Food Security and Nutrition Sensitivity and Their Impact on Maternal and Child Nutrition Outcomes*".

Through analysis and synthesis of empirical evidence, the study established that one major challenge to realising the essential benefits of food security and nutrition in social protection stems from limitations in programme design and operationalisation of the social protection policies, frameworks and strategies.

The Study makes some key recommendations that include reviewing social protection policies, strategies, laws and programmes to integrate food security and nutrition considerations, increasing financing to social protection programmes in order to increase inclusion and size of the grants, fostering coordination, collaboration, and linkages among existing social protection initiatives, including behaviour change communication for food security and nutrition, and leveraging existing monitoring and evaluation frameworks to capture food security and nutrition outcomes in the short and long term.

I implore all stakeholders at different levels to take a critical look at the findings of the study for effective application to improve the sensitivity of social protection programs to food security and nutrition outcomes. This, in turn, will lead to enhanced social protection benefits to the target citizens.



A.D Kibenge

PERMANENT SECRETARY

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	Antenatal Care
DIS	Direct Income Support
DRDIP	Development Response to Displacement Impact Project
ESPP	Expanding Social Protection Programme
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FSN ISPA	Food Security and Nutrition Inter Agency Social Protection Assessment
FSNA	Food security and nutrition Assessment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNR	Global Nutrition Report
KII	Key informant Interview
MakSPH	Makerere University School of Public Health
MGLSD	Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development
MoH	Ministry of Health
NUSAF	Northern Uganda Social Action Fund
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
SAGE	Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment
SP	Social Protection
SPPOT	Social Protection Policy Option Tools
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organisation

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This report was made possible by the generous contribution of the World Food Programme and Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development- Expanding Social Protection Programme (ESSP) Programme management Unit (PMU). The project participants and project teams of the four studied programmes namely: Senior Assistance Grant for empowerment (SAGE); NutriCash; Northern Uganda Social Action fund 3 (NUSAF 3); and Development Response to Displacement Impact Project (DRDIP) in the West Nile Region are appreciated for their contribution towards making this study a reality.

The Social protection working groups, WFP's social protection teams and ESPP's Monitoring and Evaluation teams are equally appreciated for their untiring insights that shaped this report.

Photo credits: Monitoring and Evaluation team, Expanding Social Protection Programme Management Unit. Temporary market at a Senior Citizens Grant pay point.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Social protection: Social protection is a human right that is defined as a set of policies and programmes designed to reduce and prevent poverty and vulnerability throughout the life cycle. Social protection includes benefits for children and families, maternity, unemployment, employment injury, sickness, old age, disability, survivors, and health protection.

Gender Equity: refers to the fairness and equal treatment of individuals regardless of their gender. It ensures that all individuals have access to the same opportunities, resources, and rights regardless of their gender, identity, or expression.

Food security: Refers to a state where individuals, households, nations, and regions, at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO, 2008).

Sensitivity of social protection programmes to food security and nutrition refers to how the social protection programmes affect or influence changes in food and nutrition security and how programme inputs and assumptions impact maternal and child nutrition outcomes. Sensitivity is a measure of how responsive the programme is to changes in its design or implementation.

Executive Summary

Social protection is a basic service and human right that ensures individuals live dignified lives by accessing public and private interventions to address risks and vulnerabilities that expose them to income insecurity and social deprivation, leading to undignified lives. Uganda's social protection system comprises social security and social care and support services. These services are provided by a number of stakeholders and coordinated by the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development (MoGLSD).

This study reviewed the existing Social Protection programmes for Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) sensitivity and their impact on maternal and child nutrition outcomes in the West Nile, Uganda, focusing on the districts of Yumbe, Koboko, Adjumani, Obongi, and Arua.

The review, qualitative in nature, was informed by the Inter-Agency Social Protection Assessment Food Security and Nutrition (FSN ISPA) tools of 2020. The FSN ISPA tools provided a framework of analysis on how the programmes achieved a greater positive impact on food security and nutrition. These tools were used to identify opportunities to strengthen coherence and improve the results of social assistance programmes for FSN. The FSN ISPA is complemented by other ISPA tools operating at the system level, such as the Core Diagnostic instrument (CODI) and the Social Protection Policy Options Tools (SPPOT), which assess social protection systems. Accordingly, the areas of assessment included: programme objectives and indicators; inclusiveness; adequacy of programmes; respect for rights and dignity; sustainability; coherence, integration, and governance; and responsiveness. Programmes were ranked "latent", "emerging", "moderate", or "advanced" based on the extent of fulfilment of the criteria set for each domain. A programme was considered **latent** for a particular FSN ISPA domain if none of the set sub-criteria were met; **emerging** if at least the implementation of two sub-criteria was under planning; **moderate** if at least two sub-criteria are implemented and the remaining criteria were under planning; and **advanced** if all four sub-criteria are fully implemented.

Furthermore, a contribution analysis was employed to identify the contribution of the studied social protection programmes to FSN and maternal and child nutrition outcomes. Contribution analysis relies on programme theories of change that set out how change is, or was, supposed to happen through the programme life cycle.

This study identified four social protection programmes delivered through district local governments providing direct income support (DIS) in the West Nile region. These included NutriCash, Development Response to Displacement Impact Project (DRDIP), Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF 3), and Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment (SAGE). Results on assessment of programme sensitivity to FSN show, varying levels of achievement for each programme across the FSN-ISPA domains.

Programme objectives were lacking specificity for FSN outcomes for most of the assessed programmes. Specifically, SAGE lacked explicit FSN objectives, while DRDIP and NUSAF 3 partially considered FSN in their activities. Despite showing food security outcomes, they lacked FSN indicators. NUSAF 3 and DRDIP influenced consumption but lacked clear FSN objectives or indicators in their monitoring frameworks. NutriCash, which targeted participants in the first 1,000

days of life, had direct FSN objectives, achieving nutrition outcomes as a pilot in specific districts of the West Nile region.

Inclusiveness in programs aimed to reach food-insecure, nutritionally vulnerable, and socially excluded individuals. DRDIP, NUSAF 3, and SAGE showed efforts for inclusiveness, targeting groups like refugees, pregnant women, and the elderly, although with restrictive selection criteria. NutriCash was moderate in its inclusiveness, targeting individuals within the 1,000-day window but reaching only a limited number of households in West Nile.

Adequacy: Programs were evaluated based on benefits adequacy and the inclusion of complementary interventions to address the food security and nutrition (FSN) needs of the target population. According to the ISPA-FSN framework, all four programs were categorized as emerging with slight variations in terms of adequacy and potential unintended harmful impacts. All programs considered the type, duration, and timing of benefits. However, while the benefits were deemed adequate during the design phase, current local and global market conditions indicate that the grant sizes fall short in meeting the needs of the most vulnerable individuals in the target groups. Participants highlighted that the transfer amounts are not flexible enough to support more than one person within a household. The study found that households, particularly those of older individuals, often include more members, such as younger children, who benefit from the transfers. The funds are typically used for purchasing food, supporting household farming activities, and covering medical expenses, among other uses.

Respect for Rights and Dignity: The assessment evaluated programs on their incorporation of mechanisms adhering to human rights principles and standards in their designs. Specifically, the assessment focused on the use of rights-based approaches, ensuring the right to food, and the presence of an accountability mechanism (FAO & WB 2020). The ISPA-FSN results indicated that all four programs were classified as emerging. They incorporate the principles of the right to food security in their designs, though some operational aspects could be enhanced. The right to food security and nutrition plays a vital role in upholding legal and civil rights, as well as in improving access to government services, healthcare, and social protection. The programs showed limited implementation of a right-to-food-based approach to food security and nutrition, mainly emphasizing right-to-food security approaches. These approaches leverage human rights obligations to combat food poverty and insecurity. While all programs are aimed at decreasing poverty and vulnerability to respect rights and dignity, only NutriCash clearly integrates the right-to-food-based approach in its operations through activities and indicators that ensure diverse diet consumption. On the other hand, the DRDIP and NUSAF 3 programs aimed to enhance community production but lacked specific indicators for adequate and nutritious diets. The SAGE program did not include indicators related to access to or the right to food. Integrating the right to food-based approaches and food security in social protection programs can contribute to the realization of diverse economic, social, and cultural rights (FAO, 2020).

Sustainability: Programs were evaluated based on longevity and their ability to support communities and beneficiaries in developing sustainable processes to address current and future food security and nutrition needs. DRDIP and NUSAF 3 programs ranked moderate, as they integrated sustainability in their designs and activities but did not equally cover all sustainability dimensions. In comparison, NutriCash and SAGE were ranked emerging on sustainability due to concrete measures, although practices mainly focused on financial aspects. All programs considered sustainability in their

initiatives, with a primary focus on economic and environmental sustainability at the community level. DRDIP and NUSAF 3 included strategies for environmental conservation, like soil and water conservation, reforestation, small-scale irrigation, and maintenance of social services to promote sustainable natural resources.

Coherence, integration, and governance: This component assessed programs' connections to health, agriculture, and water sectors to address food insecurity causes. Programs' alignment with existing programs to deliver services for food security was also evaluated. All four programs ranked moderate, showing varied connections within sectors and across existing programs, though with limitations. The program designs detailed actors' roles in different sectors and establishes coordination mechanisms to reflect the multisectoral programming capacity within SP programs. However, the understanding and participation of sectors and actors in SP programming coordination were limited. The results show alignment with sectors like water, agriculture, works, and environment, as well as coordination across institutions during the design, administration, and delivery phases. Positive food security and nutrition outcomes' determinants include healthy diets' production, consumption, and preparation. Multisectoral actions among related agencies linked to SP and food security and nutrition ensure positive outcomes. External coherence exists in planning interventions and designs. For example, DRDIP, NutriCash, and NUSAF3 showed integral connections across sectors like agriculture, water, and environment conservation, community projects in works and transport, and gender and health for program coordination to address food and nutrition insecurity.

Responsiveness: The study evaluated programs' abilities to react to sudden changes in food security and nutrition (FSN) and adjust their scale according to the evolving needs of the target group. It examined the presence of regular monitoring and evaluation systems to monitor FSN indicators, which could partly show responses to shocks and guide program modifications. However, due to limited program funding, there were obstacles to implementation. While programs showed agility in addressing emerging environmental and food security issues, they struggled to react to financial shocks like spikes in food prices and national inflation. Nevertheless, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) was utilized to shape new program structures and aid in fundraising endeavours. For instance, DRDIP addressed the food security and nutrition challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic by delivering resources that enabled participants to cultivate and consume healthy food. This initiative led to NutriCash, a focused FSN intervention for women and children. Yet, inadequate financial resources hindered programs like DRDIP, NutriCash, and NUSAF 3 from swiftly broadening their reach in times of crisis, impacting a considerable portion of the populace. Conversely, although SAGE possesses a clear scaling-up plan, it lacks strategies to tackle short and medium-term shocks due to budget limitations. Despite the significance of social protection schemes, funding for these ventures remains minimal, accounting for only 0.78% of Uganda's GDP compared to 1.1% for Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole (GOU, 2020).

Contribution analysis showed that only NutriCash contributed directly to maternal and child nutrition outcomes. Its theory of change depicts how activities at one level led to outputs, outcomes and impacts on maternal and child nutrition in the first 1000 days of life. It can be concluded that, by design, the NutriCash programme was both sensitive and specific to food security and nutrition. On the other hand, DRDIP, NUSAF 3 and SAGE programmes did not directly contribute to maternal and child nutrition outcomes as their programme. Although the programme theories of change

showed pathways to improved livelihoods and reduced vulnerability, they did not depict pathways to changes in maternal and child nutrition at other levels (outputs, intermediate outcomes, higher outcomes and impacts). This study provides plausible evidence that incorporating FSN objectives and indicators in SP increases their likeliness to realize improved food and nutrition outcomes.

Hence, this study recommends addressing inclusiveness, adequacy, coverage, and coordination bottlenecks to deliver nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific actions in SP programmes by fostering linkages, synergies, and coordination among existing SP programmes to achieve food security and nutrition outcomes.

Furthermore, this study recommends increasing the size of grants, especially for the SAGE and LIPW programmes, to match market prices. This allows participants to engage in risky but more profitable long-term investments in their agricultural activities, thereby improving productivity and subsequent food and nutrition security. Participating in more profitable long-term investment ventures makes these communities more resilient to shocks.

To ensure that SP programmes deliver on food security and nutrition (FSN) outcomes, this study recommends that programmes incorporate FSN objectives and indicators during programme design and develop monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks that capture FSN outcomes in both the short and long-term.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

Social Protection (SP) is a basic service and human right which ensures that individuals live dignified lives by accessing public and private interventions to address risks and vulnerabilities that expose them to income insecurity and social deprivation (Government of Uganda, 2015). SP is recognized as a tool for poverty eradication, inequality reduction and economic development (FAO, 2020). In Uganda, SP programmes comprise of social security and social care services. Social security includes protective and preventive interventions that mitigate factors which lead to income shocks and affect consumption, while social care services encompass interventions that provide care, support, protection, and empowerment of vulnerable individuals who are unable to fully care for themselves (MoGLSD, 2015).

The Government of Uganda (GoU) along with partners implement various actions that may contribute to SP outcomes. However, it is not clear if these sets of SP interventions are sensitive to and can contribute to food and nutrition outcomes especially of poor and vulnerable people. This review aimed at exploring and understanding the sensitivity of existing SP programmes to food and nutrition security (FSN) and the perceived impacts thereof on maternal and child nutrition outcomes in Uganda. The focus is primarily on a selected set of government-led SP interventions. This study is hinged on pillar one of social protection with a focus on Direct Income Support (DIS¹). The study specifically identified 4 DIS SP programmes delivered through District Local Government structures in the West Nile region. These include the Development Response to Displacement Impact Project (DRDIP); the NutriCash, which is anchored within the DRDIP; the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF 3) and the Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment (SAGE).

1.2 Social Protection and Improved Food Security Outcomes

Social protection plays a crucial role in improving food security outcomes, particularly in low- and middle-income countries like Uganda. Social protection policies and programmes aim to reduce poverty, vulnerability, and inequality, and have positive impacts on food security. One aspect of social protection is addressing the social determinants of food security. A study in rural Uganda

¹ DIS is non-contributory regular, predictable cash and in-kind transfers that provide relief from deprivation to the most vulnerable individuals and households in society (MoGLSD, 2015).

showed how social support improved food security of people living with HIV/AIDS (Tsai et al. (2011). Cash transfers and food assistance programmes have been associated with improved food security outcomes. Investments in increasing the production and productivity of the poor can reduce poverty and improve food security (Agamile, 2022). Social protection interventions have also been linked to improved educational outcomes, indirectly contributing to food security. Combining cash transfers and food security measures has been shown to be significantly (Sherr et al., 2021; FAO, 2015). Sustaining income security has the potential to address the basic causes of Malnutrition among the rural poor by improving access to resources such as land, education, employment, and technology (FAO 2015). However, although predictable, cash transfers are often irregular in meeting the food security and nutrition needs of SP participants (FAO, 2017). Integrating nutrition objectives in SP programming can significantly improve the well-being of vulnerable populations and promote food security. Addressing the root causes of food insecurity and supporting sustainable livelihoods through SP programmes is essential for ensuring access to adequate and nutritious food for those most in need.

1.4 Social Protection and Maternal and Child Nutrition Outcomes

Programmes that integrate maternal and child nutrition and SP policies can effectively improve nutritional outcomes for children and adolescents (UNICEF, 2023). Evidence suggests that poor maternal nutrition is associated with adverse birth outcomes such as increased risk of preeclampsia, haemorrhage, anaemia, maternal death, stillbirth, low birth weight, and developmental delays in children (Horton et al., 2010; Abu-Saad and Fraser, 2010). These factors perpetuate the intergenerational cycle of poverty and Malnutrition, as undernourished mothers may give birth to undernourished children. This exacerbates existing inequalities and undermines the health, development, and human capital of all countries. Undernutrition also leads to productivity losses, costing low-income countries between 3 and 16% of their annual GDP (Hoddinott et al., 2016; Alderman, 2013).

While SP programmes may improve access to food and influence income timing and control, the impact of these programmes on nutritional outcomes is often mixed. It is argued that, in order to improve maternal and child nutrition outcomes, SP programmes should expand access to essential nutrition services for adolescent girls and women before and during pregnancy and while breastfeeding, including in humanitarian crises. Additionally, access to social transfer programmes

for adolescent girls and women in fragile settings and during humanitarian crises should be expanded (UNICEF, 2023).

It is important to consider how the nutritional outcomes of SP programmes tend to improve when they have explicit food security and nutrition objectives and indicators to measure progress and effectively reach the nutritionally vulnerable and promote dietary diversity, especially targeting the first 1000 days of life (FAO, 2015; Alderman, 2015). The potential for food security and nutrition sensitivity in sectors such as agriculture and SP stems in part from their large scale. Most governments allocate significant resources to programmes in these sectors, which are inherently targeted at the poor and often include design features that empower women to make decisions regarding nutrition and health (Alderman, 2013). However, SP programmes often do not incorporate food security and nutrition objectives and indicators in their designs.

As shown in Figure 1, there are linkages in pathways through which SP can increase the availability of household resources, improve productivity, strengthen livelihoods and consequently reduce poverty (FAO, 2020).

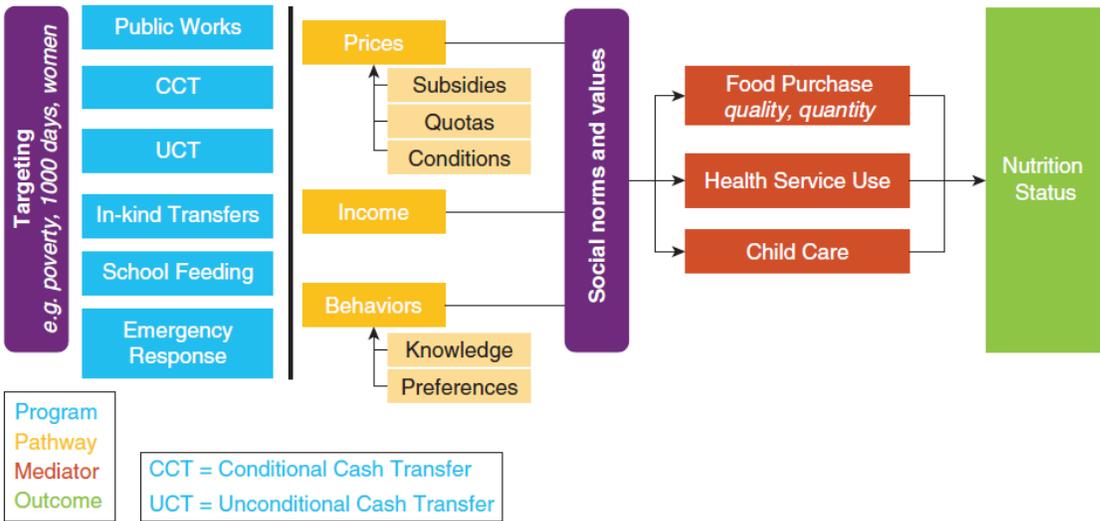


Figure 1. Indicative pathways from social protection to nutrition adopted from Alderman (2015).

To achieve these outcomes, SP programmes must incorporate all four pillars of food security: availability, access, stability, and utilization. By doing so, these programmes can effectively eliminate undernutrition and poverty (Davis et al., 2016). Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that SP programmes can have a positive influence on food security and nutrition when they are

created with clear nutrition objectives, effectively reach those who are nutritionally vulnerable, and incorporate design features that empower women.

1. 5 Study Goal and Objectives

This study sought to review and understand the existing SP sector-specific programmes for FSN sensitivity and the impact thereof on maternal and child nutrition outcomes in West Nile, Uganda.

The specific objectives of this study were to:

Objective 1: Identify SP programmes and provide an analysis of their FSN sensitivity.

Objective 2: Examine the contribution of the identified SP sector-specific programmes to maternal and child nutrition outcomes.

Each objective will be addressed using qualitative approaches. Objective 1 was addressed using FSN ISPA tools to assess the sensitivity of selected SP programmes in the West Nile delivering Direct income support programmes and objective 2 was addressed using the contribution analysis approach. These approaches are described in the sections that follow.

2.0 Scope, Approaches and Methodology

Geographic and Content Scope

This study was conducted in the West Nile Region of Uganda in June 2023. The West-Nile sub-region consists of 12 districts, of which 6 (Adjumani, Koboko, Madi-Okollo, Obongi, Yumbe, and Terego) are refugee-hosting districts (RHDs) while the other 6 (Arua, Nebbi, Zombo, Maracha, Nebbi Pakwach and Moyo) are refugee-affected districts (GOU, JICA, and IC Net, 2021).



Figure 2: Map of Uganda showing the West Nile region and the districts within the region

By June 2020, the West Nile sub-region had hosted 760,000 refugees out of Uganda's total of 1.4 million refugees. Refugees, primarily women and children from South Sudan, live in settlements within or near local communities, with access to available social infrastructure and facilities. Government and other humanitarian agencies provide assistance to refugees and host communities, but rapid and continued influx of more refugees piles pressure on existing social infrastructure, facilities, and natural resources (World Vision et al., 2021). This study, therefore assessed existing SP programmes in the West Nile region delivering DIS for their sensitivity on food security and nutrition and their impacts on maternal and child nutrition outcomes.

2.1. Study Approach/ Design

A descriptive cross-sectional study design employing qualitative data collection approaches and techniques was used to review existing SP programmes for FSN sensitivity and their impact on maternal and child nutrition outcomes.

2.1.1 The Food Security and Nutrition Inter-Agency Social Protection Assessment Tools (FSN ISPA)

To explore the sensitivity of SP programmes to FSN, Inter-Agency SP assessment (ISPA) tools were employed. Sensitivity of a programme to FSN refers to its capacity to address and positively impact the nutritional status and food security of its target population. The FSN ISPA provides a framework of analysis to assess how programmes can achieve positive impacts on FSN (FAO and World Bank, 2020). The FSN ISPA tool complements and is complemented by the Core Diagnostic Instrument (CODI) tools and the Social Protection Option Tools (SPOT). The FSN ISPA is a programme level tool that focuses on identifying opportunities to strengthen coherence and improve the results of SP programmes for FSN. Figure 3 shows the elements of the CODI framework adopted from FAO.

Accordingly, this review was based on the 7 parameters as set out by the FSN ISPA tools namely: programme objectives and indicators; inclusiveness; adequacy; responsiveness; coherence, integration, and governance; sustainability; as well as rights and dignity for system and programme analysis. Details on the framework can be found in Annex II. Programmes were ranked based on the extent of fulfilment of the criteria set for each domain (latent, emerging, moderate and advanced). A programme was ranked latent for a particular FSN ISPA domain if none of the set sub criteria were met, emerging if at least the implementation of two sub-criteria is under planning; moderate if at least two sub-criteria are implemented and the remaining criteria are under planning and advanced if all four sub- criteria were fully implemented.



Figure 3: Elements of the CODI framework for social protection programmes. Adopted from FAO & World Bank, (2020).

2.1.2 Contribution Analysis

To assess the impact of various sector-specific SP programmes on maternal and child nutrition outcomes, a contribution analysis (CA) approach was employed. CA is an approach that may be used to assess the performance of policies and programmes towards outcomes. CA is used when designing an 'experiment' to test whether the cause and effect are impractical or cannot be directly attributed to the intervention. It attempts to address the attribution challenge by focusing on the questions of 'contribution,' specifically to what extent observed results are the consequence of the policy, programme, or service activity (Mayne, ND). Figure 4 illustrates the stages of followed in undertaking a contribution analysis.



Figure 4: Steps in Contribution Analysis; Adapted from Mayne (2018)

2.2 Data Collection Methods

Qualitative methods were used to evaluate the sensitivity of SP programmes to FSN and their contribution to maternal and child nutrition outcomes.

2.2.1 Document analysis

A review of the existing published and grey literature was undertaken to provide in-depth analysis and understanding of the SP programmes and to draw evidence on sensitivity of programmes to FSN and on the contribution of each programme to maternal and child nutrition outcomes. This

was important for drawing out the contribution story. The desk review focused on project documents and grey literature on the SAGE, NutriCash, DRDIP, and NUSAF 3 programmes, with an emphasis on actions undertaken in the West Nile region.

2.2.2 Qualitative Data Collection

The primary data were collected through key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). KIIs with subject matter experts across the 4 programmes provided facts and perceptions on the sensitivity to FSN outcomes as well as programmes' contribution to maternal and child nutrition outcomes. FGDs were conducted among programme participants to obtain a diverse range of perceptions and to allow for group interactions and experience sharing. FGDs allowed participants to express their views in a manner that generated both consensus and disagreement regarding various issues. Men-only and female-only FGDs were conducted to mitigate intra-sex power and cultural dynamics. Participants also discussed the most effective recommendations for strengthening the existing or designing new SP programmes that are sensitive to FSN. Overall, 15 FGDs and 23 KIIs were conducted in Arua, Koboko, Yumbe, Obongi, and Adjumani districts (see Appendix 1I).

2.3 Data Processing, Analysis and Synthesis

Qualitative data generated from FGDs and in-depth KIIs were transcribed and organized using NVivo 14 Software. The data were read for themes and analyzed for emerging issues in accordance with the objectives of the review. Data were then triangulated to establish existent learning, conclusions, and recommendations for strengthening FSN in existing SP programmes. The findings were analyzed for themes to support the initial argument by pointing out areas of convergence and divergence within the views expressed by stakeholders.

3.0 Results

3.1 Identified Social Protection Programmes

The SP programmes that informed this review were social security programmes providing DIS and implemented through district local governments in West Nile. These programmes included the Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment (SAGE), Northern Uganda Social Action fund (NUSAF 3), Development Response to Displacement Impact Project (DRDIP) and the Child sensitive Social Protection- NutriCash (CSSP-NutriCash); and The programmes are described in the sections that follow.

a) Social Assistance Grants for the Empowerment (SAGE); Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment (SAGE), the first of its kind in Uganda, is implemented by the Government under the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development (MGLSD). This programme seeks to reduce material deprivation, increase economic security, reduce social exclusion, and increase access to services among older persons. The programme was initially piloted in 15 districts in 2010 under Phase I and rolled out to an additional 40 districts in Phase II between financial years 2015/16, and year 2019/20. Since then, the programme has a nationwide coverage reaching 348,000 older persons aged 80 years and above. The programme delivers a monthly unconditional cash transfer (UCT) as DIS of UGX 25,000. In addition, the programme delivers financial literacy training and support to help older persons manage their finances and improve economic opportunities. The programme is documented to reduce old age poverty and improve the wellbeing among older persons. This programme is financed under the national budget with annual allocations.

b) The third Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF 3); The NUSAF 3 program was implemented by OPM through district local governments with funding from the World Bank. NUSAF 3 originated in the government's Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) and was considered Uganda's largest public works programme from 2016-2021. The programme sought to improve the livelihoods of vulnerable communities in northern Uganda affected by long periods of conflict within the watershed districts. The NUSAF 3 programme was composed of four components including community driven development, livelihood support and social protection. The Labour-Intensive Public Works (LIPW) under the livelihood support programme provided DIS for temporary/seasonal employment opportunities for poor and vulnerable households and

disaster risk financing. The NUSAF 3 was implemented in 63 districts, mostly in Northern Uganda, including the West Nile and Karamoja regions, reaching 43,084 households with a grant total of US \$130 million. The project beneficiaries received UGX 5,500 per day worked for only 54 days a year.

c) Development Response to Displacement Impact Project (DRDIP); The DRDIP project was implemented between 2019 and December 2023. DRDIP sought to improve access to basic social services, expand economic opportunities, and enhance environmental management in the refugee hosting districts. Implemented through the OPM, among district local governments and funded by the World Bank, the project specifically integrated three components including SENRM (Sustainable Environment and Natural Resources Management), LSP (Livelihoods Support Programme) and SESI (Social Economic Services and Infrastructure). DRDIP's LSP component was implemented through the Labour-Intensive Public Works (LIPW) approach, targeting the able bodied poorest of the poor households in the target communities. The LSP component provided training and support to help refugee and host communities improve income generating activities. DRDIP was implemented in 15 refugees hosting districts of west Nile reaching 2,819,403 persons displaced by humanitarian emergencies and disasters with funding of up to US \$ 200 million.

d) Child Sensitive Social Protection (CSSP) Project

The Child Sensitive Social Protection (CSSP) programme is implemented by WFP and UNICEF and supported by SIDA. The project commenced in July 2019 and will run until end of 2024. The CSSP project seeks to improve resilience and has three major components namely, health systems strengthening; social protection system strengthening; and cross-cutting activities including Nutrition Sensitive Social Protection (NutriCash) and evidence generation. NutriCash component is a DIS intervention that is implemented by UNICEF and WFP in partnership with the government of Uganda. This component aims to improve the nutrition and health of vulnerable communities in the West Nile. NutriCash is a cash-based transfer plus (CBT⁺) intervention coupled with activities such as social behaviour change communication; back yard gardening; and financial literacy that aim to enable participants to produce and consume nutritious foods and procure other essential components. NutriCash is implemented through the LIPW component of the DRDIP project households and complements nutrition needs and dietary requirements of children in the

first 1,000 days of life. This intervention ensures sustainable improvement in nutrition outcomes and healthy early childhood development as well as improved access to health and nutrition services at health facilities. An unconditional transfer of a monthly 48000 Uganda shillings is given to eligible women. The NutriCash project is implemented in the eight refugee hosting districts in West Nile (Adjumani, Arua Obongi, Yumbe, Koboko, Terego, Moyo and Madi Okolo districts) within the Watershed areas and in the communities, reaching 134,000 households.

3.2 Sensitivity of Identified SP Programmes to FSN

This analysis, as well as the inquiry, was guided by the ISPA-FSN broad areas that assess sensitivity of SP programmes to Food security and Nutrition (FSN). Sensitivity of a programme to FSN refers to its capacity to address and positively impact the nutritional status and food security of its target population. Accordingly, the areas of assessment include programme objectives and indicators; inclusiveness; adequacy to programmes; respect to rights and dignity; sustainability; coherence, integration and governance; and responsiveness.

The ISPA-FSN framework assesses performance based on four major rankings which include; latent, emerging, moderate and advanced. Accordingly, a programme was ranked **Latent** for a parameter if it needed to pay attention food security and nutrition (FSN) considerations; **Emerging** if FSN elements were present in the design, but were not reflected in practice; **Moderate** if the programme design and implementation of FSN considerations was satisfactory but performance needed strengthening; and **Advanced** if FSN considerations in programme design /implementation were highly satisfactory with broad base success in implementation and results .

3.2.1 Programme Objectives and Indicators

Reference was made to explicit inclusion of FSN objectives and indicators in the programme design of the four studied programmes. Results show that; the SAGE, DRDIP and NUSAF 3 and programme objectives were not specific to FSN outcomes and were hence ranked latent and emerging respectively (Table 1). Accordingly, SAGE was ranked latent for its lack of explicit FSN objectives within the programme, while DRDIP and NUSAF 3 were ranked emerging as they partly make considerations for FSN in their programmes by incorporating production in their programme activities. However, they lacked FSN indicators in their programme designs although food security indicators were observed in their programme evaluation documents implying, they were among the unintended project outcomes. It is argued that NUSAF 3 and DRDIP programmes

contributed to consumption smothering by design but did not incorporate objectives or indicators that directly assessed food security and nutrition outcomes in their programming.

Table 1: Overall findings on the SAGE, NutriCash, NUSAF 3 and DRDIP programmes for considerations on explicit FSN programme objectives and indicators

Programme	Latent	Emerging	Moderate	Advanced
NutriCash			X	
DRDIP		X		
NUSAF 3		X		
SAGE	X			

Nutricash was ranked emerging stage as it incorporated direct FSN objectives and indicators (Table 2) in the programme and targeted participants in the first 1,000 days of life. Although the project harvested nutrition outcomes, it could not be rated as advanced as it was delivered as a pilot in a selected districts of the West Nile region.

Table 2: NutriCash Programme outcomes and indicators

Outcome(s)	Indicator (s)
Pregnant women of Refugee households (RHDs) have improved Antenatal care (ANC) attendance	Percent of women from ANC attendance within the first trimester
	percent of women attending 4 ANC contacts
	Proportion of pregnant women registering 8 ANC Complete Contacts
Women of reproductive age-group in RHDs have improved nutrition status	Women of reproductive age group receive 5 or more food groups (Food Consumption Score nutrition -FCS-N)
	Proportion of Care Givers or HHs adopting Back yard Gardens
Nutrition and health outcomes of children under 2 years of age in RHDs improved	percent of children aged 0-6 months that have exclusive breastfeeding
	percent of children of 6–23 months who receive minimum acceptable diet
	Proportion of children under 2 screened for acute Malnutrition and referred/linked to nutrition and health services.
	Proportion of PLW/care givers practicing critical handwashing points

Community interactions with NutriCash participants showed that nutrition outcomes were harvested through nutrition sensitive and nutrition specific activities in their programmes like the establishment of backyard gardens at households, nutrition education and antenatal care support

among mothers and children in the 1000 days window of opportunity. Further still, interactions with DRDIP and NUSAF 3 programme participants showed that some activities sought to improve livelihoods and smoother consumption of the participating households. For instance, DRDIP and NUSAF 3 incorporated activities that aimed at improving household production and incomes hence indirectly contributing to improved household food access and availability. All the three programmes made no inclusion of food security and nutrition outcome indicators in their design. However, it is argued that provision of DIS under the same programmes contributed to increased household purchasing power and consequently contributed to improved food security.

3.2.2 Inclusiveness of Social Protection Programmes

Inclusiveness refers to the extent to which programmes are designed and implemented to reach the food insecure, nutritionally vulnerable persons and socially excluded groups in the implementation areas (FAO & WB, 2020). Further, inclusiveness also assessed targeting methods (with specific consideration to the 1,000 days window of opportunity), gender and the extent to which participants were able to access their entitlements during implementation.

Mapped onto the ISPA- FSN framework, the DRDIP, NUSAF 3 and SAGE were ranked emerging on inclusiveness, while the NutriCash Programme was ranked moderate (Table 3). Results show, the four programmes made considerations to target food insecure and vulnerable groups in their implementation areas.

Table 3: Overall findings on the SAGE, NutriCash, NUSAF 3 and DRDIP programmes for inclusiveness

Programme	Latent	Emerging	Moderate	Advanced
NutriCash			X	
DRDIP		X		
NUSAF 3		X		
SAGE		X		

The targeted groups included refugee populations, internally displaced persons, watershed residents for DRDIP and NUSAF 3; pregnant and lactating women and children under five years in vulnerable households for NutriCash; and the elderly for SAGE. However, targeting was not blanket for all persons within these categories with programmes targeting the poorest of the poor

in the implementation areas with more restrictive selection criteria. The three programmes were flagship programmes except for the SAGE which is implemented at scale with national coverage. Although SAGE enjoys national coverage, its targeting was restrictive, covering only persons 80 year and older, a criterion that is not reflective of the national social protection policy that classifies older persons to include all persons older than 65 years of age. NutriCash is ranked moderate since its targeting persons in the 1,000 days window of opportunity as prescribe under the ISPA FSN framework. However, coverage is still limited as the programme reached only 13,400H/h in RHDs of West Nile, with opportunities for scalability. DRDIP used a community-based targeting strategy to improve targeting. However, participants note this was not precisely inclusive especially where only people living in watersheds and refugee settlements were considered. This limited inclusion of some of the vulnerable persons in the non-watershed communities who remained vulnerable to FSN shocks.

"... I am not opposing it, but I am now looking at the most vulnerable person who is not within the watershed because we have seen that NUSAF came in and was targeting water shades, DRDIP also came in and was targeting water shades" Programme Staff, DRDIP - Yumbe

"...by the way if you look at the livelihood of the people who are within water shed, it has improved even more ... compared to those which are left outside" - Respondent 04 – DRDIP, Yumbe.

Further still, among the targeted groups, some persons were not able to access some of the eligible participants as some did not fulfil the targeting criteria. For instance, the SAGE adjusted targeting criteria reflects older persons aged 80+ years, were excluded because their particulars were not updated in the National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) database. Efforts are underway to lower the SAGE eligibility age based on data on life expectancy for Ugandans. Similarly, some NutriCash beneficiaries who did not comply to some of the targeting criteria such as presentation antenatal care (ANC) card were excluded at registration. However, at the time of this review some of these challenges were under consideration to recruit more inclusively. For instance, efforts were underway to lower the SAGE eligibility age based on data on life expectancy for Ugandans.

"... errors on their IDs, a person is 80 years, but the national ID reads 50 years. Very many of them are like that, we are not targeting until they go and correct their errors. So that is also another thing that leads to exclusion of older persons"- KII, National level.

"... For NutriCash, if you do not have a record from the health facility showing you are pregnant, they do not take you even when they see you are pregnant"-

FGD, NutriCash, Obongi.

Among all programmes, there was need to strengthen performance on inclusiveness as all eligible participants did not benefit from the programme. Inclusiveness in SP programmes guarantees that everyone in the population is protected along the life cycle (FAO and WB 2020). However, targeting reflected programme objectives and purpose and targeting for each programme was informed by its objectives and purpose. For this reason, it is argued, programmes employed the best available approaches (categorical, geographical targeting and community) to target the most vulnerable as per objectives. However, there is need for programmes to ensure that the nutritionally vulnerable are directly targeted in to reduce vulnerability.

Although targeting is effective for FSN, the non-inclusion on FSN objective and indicators in their programme design could have been inhibitive to monitoring and realization of some FSN outcomes in practice.

3.2.3 Adequacy of programmes to Impact Food Security and Nutrition

Programmes were assessed on adequacy of the benefits and consideration of complementary interventions to fulfil the FSN needs of the target population to void unintended harmful impacts in accordance with FSN ISPA tools. Adequacy assessed programmes' benefits and the existence of complementary interventions to fulfil FSN needs of the programme participants.

Mapped against the ISPA-FSN framework, the four programmes were ranked emerging (Table 4), with a few differences on adequacy. At programme design, all programmes make consideration for the kind of benefits, duration and the timing of the benefits.

Table 4: Overall findings on the SAGE, NutriCash, NUSAF 3 and DRDIP programmes on adequacy to impact FSN outcomes.

Programme	Latent	Emerging	Moderate	Advanced
NutriCash		X		
DRDIP		X		
NUSAF 3		X		
SAGE		X		

Although the benefit size of the different programmes was considered adequate at the time of design, local and global market dynamics dictate that grant sizes are inadequate to meet the needs of the most vulnerable persons in the served populations. Asked if the benefit was adequate to meet their FSN needs, they note the size of transfer is not elastic enough to accommodate more than one person at household level. The transfer amount is used to purchase food and facilitate household agricultural production, medical care among others.

"The money which NutriCash is giving is actually not enough because you get the money, medicine is there, food is also there some small, small things are there." –

FGD, NutriCash participant, Yumbe

A similar finding is reported in programme reports where, NutriCash Routine Monitoring Survey (RMS1) of June 2023, found that almost all household members (average of 10 people) benefited from the transfer (65.4 % at baseline Vs 84.5% at time of the survey). This may have consequences on nutrition outcomes as the transfer amount is not adequate to meet the nutrition requirements of all household members (OPM, 2021). Unintended programme outcomes among participants receiving transfer bring conflict to this argument. Some programme participants reported that the transfers contributed to poverty and inequality reduction in their households. They note, the transfers improved income security (consumption smoothing), access to health and other services along the life cycle which return facilitated promotion of household participation in productive economic activities in the communities. Concerning adequacy, it is also argued, that the transfer amount is not supposed to meet all household needs, but rather serve as a top up to meeting some of the household needs.

More still, some programme participants reported that the transfer amounts were not received in time further pushing them into more vulnerability as they failed to meet their needs adequately and in time. The untimely transfers were dictated by a multitude of factors among which were long distances that led to missed appointments and unprecedented events like COVID-19.

"I come from a different parish, and they ask us to come for the money, if I miss the appointment, it means I will not receive that money. I can't claim it. If you miss the meeting, you will definitely miss getting that money. The service provider does not reach some parishes." – ***FGD Participant, Gimara***

Further, on adequacy, results show a mix of unintended positive and negative outcomes like an increase in gender base violence among participating females. Among the NutriCash programme participants, husbands took money from their spouses as soon as they received transfer money exposing them to domestic violence.

*".....the women who are benefiting because of their husbands being in the group, they (husbands) want to share whatever little the woman is receiving". – District staff, **KII***

Obongi

Although strategies are in place to address gender challenges within the communities, this result underscores the importance of male inclusion and involvement in delivering empowerment programmes. Gender dynamics play a significant role in nutrition, affecting various aspects of food access, dietary choices, and health outcomes. Gender dynamics are shaped by cultural, social, economic, and political factors and can have far-reaching implications on food security and nutrition of individuals, families, and communities (Mkandawire et al., 2021; Das & Mishra, 2021). As such they may be adequately addressed through SBCC.

3.2.4 Sensitivity to Respect for Rights and Dignity of Existing SP programme.

Programmes were assessed for whether they incorporated mechanisms in their designs that adhered to the human rights principles and standards. Particularly, the use of rights-based approaches, realization of the right to food and existence of an accountability and grievance mechanism (FAO & WB 2020). Results show from the ISPA-FSN framework show, all the four programmes were ranked emerging (Table 5). By designs the programmes make considerations for the principles of the right to FSN with some programme operational features. The right to food security and nutrition is essential for the realization of legal and civil rights as well as for enhancing access to government services, health and social protection (Pangaribowo et al., 2013). Access to such services should make considerations to dignity, rights acknowledgement, transparency and empowerment concerns (Mechlem, 2004). Accordingly, the studied programmes demonstrated limited implementation of a right to food-based approaches to FSN as they largely implemented a right to food security approaches. Right to food security approaches leverage human rights obligation to inform approaches to food poverty and insecurity which the studied projects did.

Table 5: Overall findings on the SAGE, NutriCash, NUSAF 3 and DRDIP programmes on Respect for Rights and Dignity of Existing Social Protection programme

Programme	Latent	Emerging	Moderate	Advanced
NutriCash		X		
DRDIP		X		
NUSAF 3		X		
SAGE		X		

Results show that all programmes all programmes sought to reduce poverty and vulnerability from insecurity as an indication for respect of rights and dignity. However, the programmes did not have clear implementation mechanisms on how to deliver right to food security approaches. Moreover, the programmes were guided by Government's legal frameworks, for instance objective XXII on food security and nutrition and objective XIV on the general and social economic growth as stipulated in Constitution of the Republic of Uganda. At programme level, only the NutriCash showed strong considerations to the right to food-based approach as through its activities and indicators that ensured consumption of diverse diets. Although DRDIP and NUSAF 3 programmes sought to contribute to improved production within the communities, there were no explicit indicators on the numbers of people accessing, achieving adequate diets based on their programming. On the other hand, the SAGE had no related indicators on access to or right to food. Incorporating the right to food-based approaches and food security in SP programmes has the potential to contribute to the realization of several economic, social, and cultural rights (FAO, 2020).

3.2.5 Ability and Sustainability of SP Programme to Deliver Current and Future FSN Outcomes

Programmes were assessed on two sustainability dimensions to include longevity and their ability to support communities and beneficiaries in developing sustainable processes and structures to address both current and future FSN needs and practices: a supply of nutritious foods, and sustainable resource management (FAO & WB 2020). Accordingly, DRDIP and NUSAF 3 are ranked moderate on the FSN -ISPA framework (Table 6). They incorporated sustainability in their designs and implementation activities. However, the four dimensions of

sustainability (i.e, environmental, social, economic, and financial) as laid out in the ISPA-FSN framework were not implemented with equal results. NutriCash and SAGE on the other hand, were ranked emerging on sustainability as their programming recognized and concrete measures are included in the programme. However, the promoted practices were limited, and national commitments are uncertain.

Table 6: Overall findings on the SAGE, NutriCash, NUSAF 3 and DRDIP programmes on delivering sustainable FSN outcomes.

Programme	Latent	Emerging	Moderate	Advanced
NutriCash		X		
SAGE		X		
DRDIP			X	
NUSAF 3			X	

To a large extent, all evaluated programmes took sustainability into account when designing their initiatives. However, upon closer examination, it becomes clear that these programmes primarily focused on the economic and environmental sustainability of their benefits at the community level. For example, both DRDIP and NUSAF 3 outlined strategies for environmental conservation for watershed development and planning such as soil and water conservation, reforestation, small scale irrigation, and construction and maintenance of social services. Except for SAGE which is a long-term national programme with potential to run for a longer period than the other three programmes were all flagship programmes. It is argued that the development of community assets and enhancing household capacity to undertake climate sensitive interventions contribute to the pathways for minimizing reliance on coping strategies and livelihoods that have negative consequences on the environment while progressively promoting environmental and social wellbeing (Spray, 2016). Promoting sustainable natural resource management can ensure a sustainable food supply and promote diversity in food resources for a nutritious diet (FAO, 2020). As demonstrated by the DRDIP, participants were encouraged to integrate cover crops such as legumes into reforestation projects to ensure simultaneous food production.

In order to foster economic sustainability at the community level, the DRDIP, NUSAF 3 and NutriCash programmes aimed to strengthen participating households' economic foundations by promoting diversified livelihoods. Through the transfer of knowledge on FSN, through Social and

behaviour change communication, NutriCash ensures continuous access to sustainable production and consumptions of nutritious foods in both the short and long term.

To enhance social sustainability (practices and habits that address present and future FSN needs of individuals, households, and communities), the DRDIP, NutriCash and NUSAF 3 layered a mandatory savings component in their programme activities. On the other hand, SAGE did not have mandatory savings component. Although, beneficiaries were reported to form savings groups to meet their future needs. Such actions aimed to improve and develop social structures for social investment, risk pooling and resilience for managing future risks,.

"We were told to save that money so as to buy small livestock like chicken in the name of the baby so that the chicken can produce eggs, then we eat and sell the eggs. ... There's a compulsory saving of 14,000/-UGX for every member and per month..."- FGD,

NutriCash Participant

"The beneficiary is supposed to work daily. DRDIP pays 5,500UGX per day worked and 1,500/- UGX was compulsory saving" – KII Yumbe

It was observed that social networks played an important role in addressing FSN needs at household and community levels.

3.2.6 Coherence, Integration and Governance of SP Programmes to deliver on FSN actions.

This component assessed how SP programmes are linked to sectors such as health, agriculture, and water (external coherence) to respond to the multidimensional causes of food insecurity. Programmes were also assessed on how they aligned to existing programmes to complement each other (internal coherence) to deliver services that ensure FSN considerations in SP programmes. Accordingly, all the four studied programmes were all ranked moderate (Table 7) as they demonstrated various linkages within sectors and across existing programmes, although with limitations. Programme design of articulated roles and responsibilities of the various actor in different sectors and laid out coordination mechanisms to reflect capacity for multisectoral programming as required within SP programmes.

Table 7: Overall findings on Coherence, governance, and integration of FSN consideration in SP programmes

Programme	Latent	Emerging	Moderate	Advanced
NutriCash			X	
DRDIP			X	
NUSAF 3			X	
SAGE			X	

However, from a practical point of view, the understanding and participation of different sector and actors in the coordination of the SP programming was limited. Results show that SP programmes were aligned to some sectors like water, agriculture, works and environment and coordinated across institutions at design, during administration and at delivery.

Determinants of positive FSN outcomes include production, consumption and preparation of healthy diets among. Therefore, multisectoral actions among related agencies linked to SP and FSN are important to ensure positive FSN outcomes. Among the studied programmes, external coherence was depicted in planning of interventions and their designs. For instance, the DRDIP, NutriCash and NUSAF3 programmes show integral linkages across sectors like; agriculture for production, water and environment for conservation, works and transport for community works and gender and labour for coordination of programmes to address the multisectoral nature of the causes of food and nutrition insecurity. NutriCash that sought to improve dietary intake of PLW, demonstrated linkages within the health and agriculture sectors to alleviate Malnutrition among mothers and children in the first 1000 days.

"DRDIP project concentrates on environmental protection through provision of labour by the vulnerable poor in the watersheds" – KII National level.

Evidence shows, that integrating linkages with productive sectors supports households to diversify production systems, livelihoods, increase incomes and consequently strengthens access to healthy diets (FAO, 2020).

Further evidence suggests, there were modalities within each programme to operationalize and utilize intersectoral linkages in delivering stand-alone programmes. For instance, there were observed linkages between NutriCash and DRDIP's Labour Intensive Public Works (LIPW) intervention, where synergies were leveraged to improve targeting for NutriCash. This approach shows joint programming where different programmes simultaneously offered different

interventions to the same household through different target groups to improve household resource and financial situation which are critical for achieving food security.

Coherence and integration of social protection programmes is critical in advancing food security and nutrition goals for any social protection programme. By breaking down sectoral barriers, leveraging diverse strengths, and fostering collaborative governance, social protection programmes can offer more holistic and impactful solutions to food security and nutrition (FAO & WB, 2020). As we navigate the path towards a more food-secure and nourished Uganda, embracing these principles will be instrumental in building sustainable and resilient communities.

Governance details clear internal rules, regulations, reporting mechanisms, and operating procedures specific the relationships, roles, and responsibilities of bodies and actors involved in social protection (FOA & WB, 2020) to deliver on food security and nutrition. Accordingly, the National Social Protection Policy (2015), forms basis on which all the programmes were anchored while the MGLSD provides guidance and oversight of social protection programmes at national level. The programmes were delivered through district local governments and related sectors and institutions. These programmes are reflective of national and sectoral plans in health and agriculture as depicted in the Uganda Nutrition Action Plan and the National Development Plan III.

*"Yes, at national, number one is the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and we are the institution directly mandated to roll out social protection, so our functions are clear; design, implement, manage and report on social protection.... But beyond that, we work with other institutions at national level." – **KII, National level***

Although, the governance and institutional mandates are clearly defined in programme documents and guidelines, the existing government structures through which social protection programmes are delivered were poorly facilitated to coordinate SP programmes to lower local government levels. Specifically, the limited institutional capacity to design, implement and monitor food security and nutrition activities.

"And the last in all these projects whether SAGE or DRDIP we have a problem of logistics. These things require us to always run around. But we don't have transport.

Completely we don't have transport. So, this is a very big challenge attached to us." –

KII Yumbe

Although these arrangements are in place, there was limited capacity to deliver food security and nutrition actions in the four programmes especially for the SAGE, NUSAF 3 and DRDIP. On deep analysis, this was likely because the three programmes did not explicitly lay out food security and nutrition considerations in their programme objectives and designs.

3 .2.7 Responsiveness of SP Interventions to FSN Shocks

The extent to which the studied SP programmes responded to sudden changes in FSN and adapted to scale considering changing needs of the target population was assessed. This parameter also includes existence of regular M&E mechanisms to monitor FSN indicators, programme reviews and the utilization of evaluation results for programme adaptation. Results reveal, DRDIP, NUSAF 3, SAGE and NutriCash are ranked at moderate (Table 8) as they demonstrate shock response and transitions informed programme design. However, there were implementation bottlenecks that did not allow for adequate response times given limited programme budgets during implementation.

Table 8: Overall findings on Responsiveness of SP intervention to FSN shocks

Programme	Latent	Emerging	Moderate	Advanced
NutriCash			X	
DRDIP			X	
NUSAF 3			X	
SAGE	.		X	

This study found that programmes were flexible in responding to emerging related to t the environmental and food security. However, they were not able to respond to financial stocks such as increase to food prices and national inflation. The inability of programmes to address financial shocks is mentioned throughout this study as participants note that the amount of support provided is insufficient to meet their household needs. Despite not being able to respond to shocks in real time, the study found that monitoring and evaluation (M&E) was used to inform new programme and resource mobilization efforts. For example, in response to Covid-19 pandemic impacts on food security and nutrition, DRDIP modified its activities to include provision of seeds (nutrient-rich crops). This enabled participants to produce and consume nutritious foods during that period. This

response also influenced the design of a more targeted FSN intervention for women and children, called NutriCash.

Furthermore, it is noted that a significant proportion of the population is affected by shocks and disasters. However, there are notable delays in expanding programme coverage as programmes are not flexible enough to accommodate more participants in real time. NutriCash, DRDIP and NUSAF 3 cannot easily include more participants due to limited financing. Yet, SAGE has a clear mechanism for scaling up but has not evolved enough to respond to medium- and short-term shocks also due to budget constraints. SP interventions are effective when their response structures are established before shocks occur and when they have clear mechanisms for rapidly increasing support to existing beneficiaries or expanding coverage to new beneficiaries during crises (FAO& WB, 2020). However, financing for SP programmes remains low at only 0.78% of Uganda's GDP compared to 1.1% for most of Sub Saharan Africa (GOU, 2020).

4.0 Contribution of the SP programmes to Maternal and Child Nutrition Outcomes

This study assessed the impacts of SAGE, DRDIP, NUSAF 3, and NutriCash on maternal and child nutrition outcomes. The contribution analysis approach was used to trace the pathways through which these programmes influenced maternal and child nutrition indicators. Only NutriCash directly contributed to maternal and child nutrition outcomes. This programme specifically targeted women and children during the first 1000 days, which is a critical window of opportunity. Evidence suggests that SP programmes play a crucial role in addressing the determinants of nutritional status and wellbeing for mothers and children (UNICEF, 2020).

The design of NutriCash focused on providing support and assistance to vulnerable populations, particularly women and children, which ultimately influenced their nutritional outcomes. Literature suggests that social protection programmes that consider broader determinants of maternal and child nutrition, such as maternal education, nutrition, and care (Bhutta et al., 2020), as well as the broader social and economic environment (Sl et al., 2021; Mkandawire & Hendriks, 2018), are more likely to have an impact on maternal and child nutrition outcomes. Cader and Perera (2011) argue that SP programmes should include elements such as social assistance and social services, including maternal and child health and nutrition programmes, to effectively address the broader determinants of maternal and child nutrition.

Well-designed, targeted, and implemented nutrition-sensitive programmes that integrate nutrition and health components with elements from other sectors are more likely to have a significant impact on child nutrition (Olney et al., 2019). As observed from the SAGE, DRDIP, and NUSAF 3, households often have children under the age of two who could benefit from this integration. The synergistic operation of SP programmes can have positive effects on children and women's nutrition and health, highlighting the potential for integrated approaches to enhance maternal and child nutrition (Narayanan et al., 2019). Moreover, the use of SP programmes to improve maternal and child nutrition has been highlighted, with evidence suggesting that these programmes can contribute to capital formation, human capital development, and improved labour productivity, ultimately impacting the nutritional standards of beneficiaries (Khan, 2013).

To enhance future programming and contribute to maternal and child nutrition, programmes may need to directly target participants within the 1000-day spectrum or households with women of

reproductive age and children under five years. For example, the SAGE programme could also be linked to programmes that target women and children. The average household size of older persons in Uganda is 5 persons, and evidence suggests that many of them live with younger children.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

This study aimed to review the sensitivity of existing social protection programmes to food security and nutrition, as well as their impacts on maternal and child nutrition outcomes. The ISPA-FSN tools were used to assess sensitivity, while contribution analysis was used to assess impact. The programmes studied (NutriCash, DRDIP, NUSAF 3, and SAGE) were flagship programmes designed to alleviate vulnerability among the people of Uganda. These programmes embody respect for dignity and human rights through various frameworks and structures that ensure the constitutional obligation of the Government of Uganda to protect its citizens and address their concerns in difficult situations.

Assessed against the ISPA-FSN framework, SAGE, DRDIP, and NUSAF 3 were not sensitive to FSN considerations. However, they indirectly contributed to some FSN outcomes through consumption smoothing. The FSN outcomes were not measured at the programme level for SAGE, NUSAF 3, and DRDIP. Evidence suggests that the design of these programmes can be enhanced through existing synergies to maximize and sustain their potential to deliver on FSN outcomes.

On the other hand, the NutriCash programme was designed to address nutrition challenges among a specific population demographic in the first 1000 days of life. The results from NutriCash further reaffirm recommendations from literature on including clear nutrition objectives at the design stage and indicators during implementation to make SP programmes food and nutrition sensitive. NutriCash therefore directly addresses underlying determinants of foetal and child nutrition and development through comprehensive and multisectoral initiatives. Although NutriCash was not ranked advanced on the ISPA-FSN framework, as some parameters like adequacy and inclusiveness required strengthening, it demonstrates prospects of success, especially in achieving maternal and child nutrition and growth outcomes. Thus, NutriCash can serve as a benchmark for other programmes seeking to design nutrition-sensitive SP programmes.

Regarding the impacts of SP programmes on maternal and child nutrition outcomes, this study demonstrates that these programmes play a pivotal role in contributing to maternal and child nutrition by addressing multiple determinants, including maternal education, nutrition, care, and the broader social and economic environment. The studied programmes as seen from the

NutriCash programme have the potential to enhance the nutritional outcomes of mothers and children through inclusive, targeted, and integrated approaches, ultimately contributing to improved maternal and child nutrition and wellbeing.

5.2 Recommendations

Policy and programmatic recommendations are drawn based on the need to identify and analyze the sensitivity of selected SP programmes to FSN issues including coverage, processes, systems, and equity and how all these contribute to the desired maternal and child nutrition outcomes.

5.2.1 Policy recommendations

To address bottlenecks in inclusiveness, adequacy, coverage, and coordination in order to deliver nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific actions in SP programmes, this study recommends fostering linkages, synergies, and coordination among existing SP programmes to achieve food security and nutrition outcomes. Raising awareness within sectors and existing programmes to mainstream FSN considerations in SP programmes could be of great use. Well-coordinated and synergistic operations in SP programmes are documented to have positive impacts on children and maternal nutrition and health. Improving coordination and building synergies within sectors and among stakeholders encourages the use of existing national food security and agricultural policy processes to prioritize FSN coherence in policy and programmes agendas.

Furthermore, this study recommends increasing the size of grants, especially for SAGE and LIPW programmes under DRDIP and NUSAF, to match current economic situation. Timely and sizeable transfers provide security and alleviate cash flow constraints for households. This allows participants to engage in more profitable long-term investments, for instance, in agriculture by acquiring productivity enhancing technology (seed, fertilizer, tools, etc.) and subsequently improving food and nutrition security. Such investments can create more resilient communities.

5.2.2 Programme Recommendations

To ensure that SP programmes deliver on FSN, this study recommends that programmes incorporate FSN objectives and indicators during programme design and develop monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks that capture these outcomes both in the short and long term. By

incorporating FSN considerations into M&E frameworks, SP programmes can ensure that FSN outcomes are routinely monitored.

Behaviour change communication for food and nutrition is crucial in achieving maternal and child nutrition outcomes through SP interventions. Improvements in nutrition outcomes depend on various factors, such as food practices and behaviours, which are often influenced by social norms. To effectively change community food preparation, consumption, and hygiene habits, social behavior change communication trainings should be combined with intensive food security and awareness campaigns, as demonstrated by the NutriCash. Similarly, close monitoring at the household level will ensure that SP interventions deliver effective results in terms of food security, as well as maternal and child nutrition outcomes.

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Annexes

ANNEX 1: FSN-ISPA Framework completed for each programme and domain areas

Programme	Latent (Attention is needed to include FSN)	Emerging (Elements are present in the design , however, they are not reflected in practice)	Moderate (Programme design is satisfactory but performance needs strengthening)	Advanced (Programme design /implementation is highly satisfactory with broad base success in implementation and results
Nutricash			Food Security and nutrition considerations are institutionalized and implemented with initial results from the pilot.	
DRDIP		Food security and nutrition considerations are integrated in the design. There is a degree of institutionalization		
NUSAF 3		(e.g. the national social protection policy, the UNAP II, proramme documents).		
SAGE	Food security and nutrition considerations are not integrated in the programme design	Food security and nutrition outcomes		

		are observed as in-direct programme outcomes.		
Objectives and indicators				
NutriCash			Programme design and implementation arrangements directly address FSN objectives. However, some limitations exist to fully achieve programme targets.	
DRDIP		Programme design documents incorporate FSN partially. Programmes are implemented and indicators do not directly address FSN outcomes.		
NUSAF 3		Programme design documents incorporate FSN partially. Programmes are implemented and indicators do not directly address FSN outcomes.		

SAGE	Lacks consideration for explicit FSN objectives within the programme. Programme objectives are not specific to FSN outputs.			
Inclusiveness				
NutriCash				The programme includes targeting the food insecure and vulnerable in the 1,000 days window of opportunity, but with challenges. Coverage is still limited as the programme reached only 13,400H/h in RHDs of West Nile. Efforts are being made to be more inclusive of the food insecure and nutritionally vulnerable.
DRDIP		The programme design includes targeting the food insecure and vulnerable groups through diverse modalities (Refugees and internally displaced		

		<p>persons, water sheds). However, the targeting is not yet effective. The design includes mechanisms to enable programmes to access the most vulnerable. Piloting may be underway with FSN Sensitive targeting as seen in the DRDIP.</p>	
<p>NUSAF 3</p>		<p>The programme design includes targeting the food insecure and vulnerable groups through diverse modalities (internally displaced persons). However, the targeting is not yet effective. The design includes mechanisms to enable programmes</p>	

			to access the most vulnerable.		
SAGE			<p>The programme design includes targeting the food insecure and vulnerable groups- the elderly.</p> <p>However, the targeting is not yet effective.</p> <p>The design includes mechanisms to enable programmes to access the most vulnerable.</p>		
Adequacy					
NutriCash			<p>Benefits, duration, and timing are considered in the design of the programme to meet the needs of the most vulnerable.</p> <p>Some efforts are underway to align the benefits, duration, and timing of those most in need, but are not yet fully implemented</p>		

DRDIP		Benefits, duration, and timing are considered in the design of the programme to meet the needs of the most vulnerable.		
NUSAF 3		Benefits, duration, and timing were considered in the design of the programme to meet the needs of the most vulnerable.		
SAGE		Benefits, duration, and timing are considered in the design of the programme to meet the needs of the most vulnerable(over 80years old) Some efforts are underway to align the benefits, duration, and timing of those most in need, but are not yet fully implemented		
Respect for rights and dignity				

NutriCash		<p>The design of the programme includes principles of rights concerning FSN with some degree of programme operational features. There is general awareness of the programme.</p>		
DRDIP		<p>The design of the programme includes principles of rights concerning FSN with some degree of programme operational features. There is minimal implementation of a rights-based approach.</p>		
NUSAF 3		<p>The design of the programme includes principles of rights concerning FSN with some degree of programme operational features. There is minimal implementation of a rights-based approach.</p>		

SAGE		The design of the programme includes principles of rights concerning FSN with some degree of programme operational features. There is minimal implementation of a rights-based approach.		
Delivering sustainable FSN outcomes.				
NutriCash		Sustainability is recognized and concrete measures are included in the programme. However, the promoted practices are limited, and national commitment is uncertain as the programme is a flagship programme		
SAGE		Sustainability is recognized and concrete measures are included in the programme. However, the promoted practices		

		are limited, and national commitment is uncertain owing to limited budget allocations. The programme is silent of environmental sustainability		
DRDIP				<p>Sustainability is incorporated in the design and implementation. The four dimensions of sustainability (i.e, environmental, social, economic, and financial) are not implemented with equal results and not to scale</p> <p>Sustainability is incorporated in the design and implementation. The four dimensions of sustainability (i.e, environmental, social, economic, and financial) are not implemented with equal results.</p>
NUSAF 3				<p>Sustainability is incorporated in the design and implementation. The four dimensions of sustainability (i.e, environmental, social, economic, and financial) are not implemented with equal results.</p>
Coherence, governance, and integration				

NutriCash			<p>NutriCash implemented cross-sectoral linkages at programme level. The design of the programme has articulated roles and responsibilities, coordination mechanisms and the capacity needed for multisectoral approach.</p>	
DRDIP			<p>Programme is implemented cross-sectoral linkages at programme level. Strengthening of the coherence is required (like coordinated distribution of benefits and possibility of participants accessing multiple services) in practice. The design of the programme has articulated roles and responsibilities, coordination mechanisms and the capacity needed for multisectoral approach.</p>	

NUSAF 3			<p>Cross-sectoral linkages at programme level are implemented. Strengthening of the coherence is required (like coordinated distribution of benefits and possibility of participants accessing multiple services) in practice. The design of the programme has articulated roles and responsibilities, coordination mechanisms and the capacity needed for multisectoral approach. However, from a practical point of view, understanding and participation in the coordination of the bodies are limited.</p>
SAGE			<p>Cross-sectoral linkages at programme level are implemented with limitations. Strengthening of the coherence is required</p>

			(like coordinated distribution of benefits and possibility of participants accessing multiple services including health, food and nutrition among others	
Responsiveness				
NutriCash			<p>The issue of FSN during shocks or transitions has been integrated into the design.</p> <p>In the implementation (flagship programme) there are still bottlenecks that do not allow for adequate response times, funds available.</p>	
DRDIP			<p>FSN responsiveness during shocks or transitions has been integrated into the design.</p> <p>However, resources and mechanisms are not yet in place. The programme is not yet able to respond effectively to shocks.</p>	

				<p>The M&E system is able to inform adjustments out of the programme to respond to changes in the FSN among participating households.</p>	
NUSAF 3				<p>FSN responsiveness during shocks or transition was integrated into the design. However, resources and mechanisms are not yet in place to handle shocks in a timely manner.</p> <p>The programme is not yet able to respond effectively to shocks.</p>	
SAGE				<p>FSN responsiveness during shocks or transitions has been integrated into the design by targeting older persons who are most at risk.</p> <p>However, resources and mechanisms are not yet in place for blanket implementation .</p>	

AnnexII: Study participants

S/No	Name	Title	Institution	Level
1	Mr. James Ebitu	Director SP	MGLSD	National
2	Mr. Stephen Kasajja	Head ESP PMU	MGLSD	National
3	Mr. Paul Onapa	Deputy Head ESP PMU	MGLSD	National
4	Ms. Beatrice Okillan	Policy & Advocacy Coordinator	MGLSD	National
5	Dr Robert Limlim	National Director	DRDIP/NUSAF	National
6	Lorika Caroline	Programme Manager	DRDIP	National
7	Alfred Odera	Operations Manager	NUSAF	National
8	Judith Mutabazi	Planner & SP-FPP	NPA	National
9	Aliyi Walimbwa	Principal Health Planner	MoH	National
10	Brian Kiswi	Head of Social Protection - Arua Office	WFP	Arua
11	Caroline Oyella	PPO Systems Strengthening - Arua Office	WFP	Arua
12	Bukenya Jude Mark	CAO	District Local Gov't - RHD/WN	Arua
13	Akera John Bosco	CAO	District Local Gov't - RHD/WN	Koboko
14	Drangule Sunday	MOH	District Local Gov't - Maternal and child Health	Obongi
15	OumaCharles	CAO	District Local Gov't - RHD/WN	Obongi
16	Grandfield Oryono Omonda	CAO	District Local Gov't - RHD/WN	Adjumani
17	Akumu Sarah	CDO District /SAGE:	District Local Gov't - RHD/WN	Adjumani
18	Patrick Kurekure	Town Clerk	District Local Gov't – NUSAF 3 focal person	Adjumani TC
19	Joachim Andijo	DRDIP/NutriCash Desk Officers	District Local Gov't - RHD/WN	Arua
20	Ojock Bran	DRDIP/NutriCash Desk Officers	District Local Gov't - RHD/WN	Yumbe

21	Jimmy Wumala	DRDIP/NutriCash Desk Officers	District Local Gov't - RHD/WN	Madi Okollo
22	Robert Asiku	DRDIP/NutriCash Desk Officers	District Local Gov't - RHD/WN	Terego
23	Tako Godfrey	DRDIP/NutriCash Desk Officers	District Local Gov't - RHD/WN	Obongi
24	Abur Gulam	DRDIP/NutriCash Desk Officers	District Local Gov't - RHD/WN	Adjumani

