

Uganda Host the Community of Practice Conference

The Community of Practice (CoP) of Cash Transfers in Africa is a learning platform where countries meet, share experiences and learn from each other on issues of Cash transfers and Social Protection. This year Uganda was the proud host of CoP.

The five-day gathering brought together close to 100 practitioners from Government, development partners, local and international NGOs, private sector, academia and researchers to share experiences and learn from each other on issues related to social cash transfer programs and social protection under the theme “***how to make social protection systems in the region more responsive to shocks***”.

While speaking at the opening session of the conference the Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development Hon Janat Mukwaya said, that the the call for social protection programmes is not only based on human rights or moral grounds, but on the belief and fact that social protection is an important instrument for economic growth. It is an investment in human capital development which is no less important than investments in physical infrastructure,”

It was noted that African countries have common characteristics of high poverty, high unemployment, high dependency ratios, natural and man-made disasters, and high disease burden. All these require substantial investments in social protection interventions and yet today most of the countries are performing at less than 2 per cent of GDP investment in social protection.

Mukwaya noted that, Social security is a human right and a social and economic necessity. It should therefore be treated as a core function of development policy as emphasized by the Sustainable Development Goals / Agenda 2030.

she therefore emphasized that While safeguarding the right to social protection is an obligation of the State, it remains a shared responsibility with partners and citizens.

In the Africa region and beyond, there is evidence to show that social protection programmes targeting lifecycle risks and vulnerabilities that people face at different stages in life have an impact on health and well-being of recipients.

Here in Uganda, Government has adopted the National Social Protection Policy, and integrated it in its National Development Plan (NDPII), underscoring the importance of social protection in addressing risks and vulnerabilities.

The UNICEF Representative in Uganda Dr. Doreen Mulenga said that “With over 56 per cent of the population below 18 years of age, Uganda’s vision to become a middle-income country by 2040 remains highly contingent on the Government’s ability to safeguard children’s rights.” Adding that Investing in its young population will enable Uganda to reap an unprecedented demographic dividend.

Efforts are underway to build a comprehensive national social protection system, including adoption of the policy implementation roadmap, putting in place the national coordination architecture, and a single registry. Several social protection interventions currently under implementation have demonstrated strong evidence of the positive impact on communities, notably:

It was exemplified that Direct income support interventions currently being implemented in Uganda include the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE) now in 47 districts of Uganda reaching 153,700 beneficiaries, the Disaster Risk

Financing in Karamoja region of Uganda reaching 33,000 beneficiaries, Labour intensive public works under phase three of the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund 3 in Eastern and Northern Uganda reaching 31,386 beneficiaries and others which include pensions for public servants and the National Social Security Fund for contributory social security.

Given the drive to ensure social protection systems in the region are more shock-responsive, this meeting of the Community of Practice (COP) represents an invaluable tool for learning and knowledge exchange, and will contribute to the adoption of innovative approaches to alleviate the burden of emerging global challenges on vulnerable populations. The meeting was attended by 17 Anglophone countries of the 35 that make up CoP. Countries include Angola, Botswana, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Ends.