



ADDRESSING GENDER AND EQUITY IN SOCIAL PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS: A KEY PRE-REQUISITE TO ACHIEVING INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING AND DEVELOPMENT

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Ladies and Gentlemen

Introduction

Social protection is at the heart of attaining the Global Agenda 2030's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Africa's Agenda 2063. To that effect many African countries, including Uganda, are incorporating social protection policies and programmes into their action plans. Within the context of poverty and inequality in Sub-Saharan Africa, social protection programmes are increasingly seen as promising interventions for inclusive development. Research has shown that social protection programmes yield positive results on the outcomes of inclusive growth - a key strategy of leaving none behind. However, it is also evident that positive results do not always reach vulnerable groups. A major explanation is that vulnerable groups often require targeted comprehensive programmes.

The National Social Protection Policy defines Social Protection as public and private interventions to address risks and vulnerabilities that expose individuals to income insecurity and social deprivation, leading to undignified lives. Vulnerability refers to peoples' inadequate capacity to manage risks and cope with shocks. People who cannot withstand income or consumption shocks, for example, are vulnerable to

significant declines in welfare including falling into abject poverty. Risk and vulnerability to poverty continue to affect large sections of society, with negative implications on Uganda's long term growth and prosperity.

Justification: Why should gender and equity be considered?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Uganda is striving for a middle income status. However, vulnerability to a range of life cycle risks and external shocks are undermining achievements of economic growth and poverty reduction. Nationally two outcome indicators show the level of achievement. The GDP growth rate target for FY2016/17 was 5.7% but 3.9% was attained. Furthermore, the proportion of the population below the poverty line had a target of 17.59% for the same year. However, the country had a 1.7% increase to 21.4%.

The main drivers of vulnerability in Uganda include:

1. **Life cycle and individual capacity risks** such as negative events that affect people at different stages. The Ugandan population is not homogeneous due to differences in individual capacities, and capabilities. These differences are a result of gender inequality; inequities based on age and disability; as well as geographical inequalities.
2. **External risks and shocks** and
3. **Social exclusion** which refers to denial of rights, opportunities and/or resources. The practice of exclusion is largely a result of gender and equity issues. Gender is the social and cultural construct of roles, responsibilities, attributes, opportunities, privileges, status of women and men, boys and girls in a given society. This determines participation, access and benefits accruing to individuals in society –with incidences of exclusion.

It is therefore a must to address gender and equity concerns in social protection interventions. The social protection system in Uganda is comprised of two pillars, namely: social security and social care and support services. Social security refers to protective and preventive interventions to mitigate income shocks and decline in

consumption due to factors such as retirement, unemployment, ill-health, disability, old age and disasters. The level of such shocks will definitely depend on where an individual was employed in the first instance.

The Uganda Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2015), indicated that although 76% of women of working age are active in the labour force (compared to 79% of men in 2012), they are mainly concentrated in the agricultural sector. This sector accounts for 75% of female employment, compared to only 65% of male employment and is characterised by low skill levels, production and productivity. Furthermore, the Uganda Labour Force Survey 2011/12 showed that 95% of all women are in informal employment.

Access to formal social protection remains extremely limited for older persons. The existing retirement schemes cover only 7% of the labour force, leaving the majority particularly those employed in the informal sector without social security at retirement. The retirement benefits sector covers people employed by Government and workers in formal private sector organizations with more than five employees. The few women employed in the formal sector, are in low paying jobs therefore earn less gratuity and pension compared to their male counterparts upon retirement. These gender inequalities must be recognized if social protection interventions are to contribute to inclusive growth. The National Development Plan II provides for social protection interventions, which are reiterated under the National Social Protection Policy to expand contributory social security to the informal sector and expand noncontributory social pension for older persons under SAGE.

Gender and Equity proposals of the strategy

Ladies and Gentlemen

The Social Protection Gender and Equity strategy seeks to guide all stakeholders to develop and implement gender-responsive, equitable and inclusive social protection interventions. The Goal of the strategy is to enhance access to equitable social protection services for men and women, boys and girls of all categories

Specific objectives are to:

- 1 .Guide stakeholders in the design of gender responsive and equitable social protection interventions.
2. Address gender inequalities and equity concerns in the delivery of social protection services.
3. Build capacity of duty bearers to effectively implement gender responsive and equitable social protection interventions, and
4. Develop and strengthen institutional systems for delivery of gender responsive and equitable social protection interventions.

These are very noble objectives that will have to be supported with robust gender and equity disaggregated data. This is to urge all stakeholders to ensure effective generation and use of gender and equity disaggregated data. With this strategy being effectively implemented following critical analysis of social protection programme planning, design and implementation, we shall go a long way in achieving inclusive growth.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let us go out and preach the Gospel of gender and equity mainstreaming into development in general and social protection interventions in particular.

I thank you for your attention.

For God and my country.