

## Social Protection Systems for Poverty Eradication in Uganda

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Uganda achieved great success in reducing poverty in the Millennium Development Goal period, surpassing the target of halving its poverty rate. Despite these gains, vulnerability remains high and the transitory nature of poverty can be seen in the fact that ‘for every three Ugandans who get out of poverty, two fall back in’ (World Bank, 2016). Taking the figures of those in extreme poverty and insecure non-poor together, almost 78% of Ugandans could be considered as vulnerable and in need of social protection.

Internationally, the importance of social protection systems is recognised in Goal 1 of the Sustainable Development Goals, by the International Labour Organisation and through the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Goal 1 of the Sustainable Development Goals aims to ‘end poverty in all its forms everywhere’, and sets as targets that countries should ‘implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable’ (United Nations, 2015).

Uganda has recognised the importance of providing comprehensive social protection systems for its population as a means to reduce poverty and support its goal of reaching middle-income country status by 2020. As such, Uganda has begun implementing a system of social protection support for vulnerable populations, encompassing two pillars: social security, and social care and support services. As a form of social security, Uganda is rolling out a programme of direct income support with support from DfID, Irish Aid, UNICEF and the World Bank. Under this programme, two forms of direct income support have been provided. The pilot period saw the introduction of Senior Citizens Grants and Vulnerable Family Grants between 2010 and 2015. In the second phase, from 2015 to 2020, the Government has phased out the Vulnerable Family Grants and expanded the scope of the Senior Citizens Grants project.

The aim of this research is to understand what the challenges are in implementing social protection systems for vulnerable populations in Uganda. The research uses qualitative methods to examine: the conceptual framework of social protection systems; the pertinence of the Ugandan policy approach as laid out in the National Social Protection Policy; the monitoring and evaluation arrangements for the social protection system; and the institutional and practical challenges facing the implementation of the social protection system at national, district and local levels.

The findings of this research will have immediate relevance for the continued implementation of the social protection measures introduced to date, as well as for other social protection measures that may be introduced in the future. The research will also have relevance for other low-income developing countries considering the introduction of social protection systems. As the National Social Protection Policy was only recently adopted in 2016, little research has been conducted on this new policy approach and so this research will address the current gap in the literature on the

implementation of social protection policies in Uganda. The research is also timely given the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, with its target of implementing social protection systems for all.