### the politics of social protection

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the case of the expanding social protection programme in uganda

petra oberberger

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Study
The Politics of Social Protection in Uganda - The Case of the Expanding Social Protection Programme

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<tr>
<td>CPRC</td>
<td>Chronic Poverty Research Centre</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisation</td>
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<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
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<td>DRT</td>
<td>Development Research and Training</td>
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<td>EPRC</td>
<td>Economic Policy Research Centre</td>
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<td>ESP</td>
<td>Expanding Social Protection</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoFPED</td>
<td>Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development</td>
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<td>MoGLSD</td>
<td>Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development</td>
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<td>NSSF</td>
<td>National Social Security Fund</td>
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<td>NUSAF</td>
<td>Northern Uganda Social Action Funds</td>
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<td>PEAP</td>
<td>Poverty Eradication Action Plan</td>
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<td>PLA</td>
<td>Platform for Labour Action</td>
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<td>SAGE</td>
<td>Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment</td>
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<td>SCG</td>
<td>Senior Citizens Grants</td>
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<td>UCRNN</td>
<td>Uganda Child Rights NGO Network</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<td>UPE</td>
<td>Universal Primary Education</td>
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<td>URAA</td>
<td>Uganda Reach the Aged Association</td>
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<td>VFG</td>
<td>Vulnerable Families Grants</td>
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1 Introduction

Social protection, especially social protection systems like cash transfer programmes for the poor and most vulnerable people, has become a main trend in the global social policy as well as development cooperation in the last years. It is strongly interconnected with the poverty reduction agenda. Building social protection systems has become popular in African countries. In recent years, several countries implemented successfully conditional or unconditional cash transfer programmes, which aim certain categories of people, like the poor, vulnerable and the elderly. (see European Development Report 2010) Uganda also introduced a pilot programme - the so called “Expanding Social Protection (ESP)” programme in 2010.

This study focuses on analysing the actors in the Ugandan social protection agenda to identify the drivers and processes, which build the social distribution of power and therefore, are responsible for the introduction of the ESP programme. This offers a dynamic view of the social contract in Uganda. Furthermore, the current social powers in Uganda will be analysed. The introduction of this programme brought a dynamic in motion, which includes a shift among the new pushing drivers and actors in Uganda.

1.1 Methods and structure

Doing research in Uganda was important to receive a comprehensive insight in the Ugandan social protection agenda and actors, participating in social protection and the current pilot programme. Therefore, several interviews were conducted with actors who are involved in this programme. Several civil society actors, a minister as well as donors and staff from the ESP secretariat, which are part of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD), were interviewed to obtain a comprehensive insight about the drivers of change in Uganda. These interviews build the important basis for this study.

First of all, the ESP programme and the measures, which are intended within this programme, will be exemplified. Then, the focus will be on the background and the history until the introduction of this programme, in order to show the main challenges and controversial issues. Next, the important actors and their interactions will be highlighted to finally analyse the social distribution of power and drivers of change in Uganda. The last chapter is dedicated to the current situation and the new forming social powers after the implementation of the ESP programme.
2 The Expanding Social Protection programme: Goals and measures

The ESP programme is a programme led by the government and has the overall goal “[…] to embed a national social protection system, including Direct Income Support for the poorest and most vulnerable.” (The Expanding Social Protection Programme 2012a: 1) This pilot programme, which is going to run until 2015, was approved by cabinet in June 2010. It is currently financed by the main donors DFID, UNICEF and IrishAid but there is also a small contribution by the government of Uganda. (David Tumwesigye, Interview 4; Joseph Bitature, Interview 3; Linda Nakakande, Interview 5) During the pilot phase, 14 districts are covered within the programme. Most of the beneficiary districts are located in northern Uganda due to the persistent high poverty rates, severe droughts as well as the consequences of the war. (Joseph Bitature, Interview 3; Sulaiman Madada, Interview 2) The selection of the districts followed the criteria seen below (The Expanding Social Protection Programme 2012a: 3):

- Share of children in the entire population
- Share of elderly persons in the entire population
- Share of orphans and vulnerable children in the child population
- Share of risky births
- Proportion of households living more than 5 km from health facilities
- Share of children (6-12 years) not attending school.

During the pilot stage, the cash transfer programme will cover around 600,000 beneficiaries, which will be around 95,000 households by 2015. (Sulaiman Madada, Interview 2) One of the objectives of SAGE is “to ensure [that] the most vulnerable are protected from economic and social risks.” (Geoffrey Bamuteta, Interview 7) Furthermore, it is not just a question of income generating but also of inclusion, participation and creating equality of opportunity. (Sulaiman Madada, Interview 2) Last but not least, SAGE should build “evidence, local evidence that social protection and particularly cash transfers are an effective way to deal with poverty and vulnerability.” (David Tumwesigye, Interview 4) The last objective is from particular importance. It was a hard and long way to get the pilot programme approved and there was and still is scepticism about the concept and impact of social protection and cash transfer programmes in Uganda, as it will be seen in the subsequent chapters of this article.

The programme consists of two main components. The first one is the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE), which includes two instruments, namely the Senior Citizens Grants (SCG) and the Vulnerable Families Grants (VFG). (The Expanding Social Protection Programme 2012a: 1)
The SCG comprises elder people at the age of 65 years and above – except in Karamoja, where people are eligible for the grants with the age of 60 years and above due to the low life expectancy there. These unconditional grants provide a monthly social pension of 23,000 UGX\(^1\) (The Expanding Social Protection Programme 2012b: 1)

The VFG are unconditional cash transfers, which target poor and vulnerable families and households. According to David Tumwesigye, the target group was chosen by the factors of limited labour capacity and high dependency. (David Tumwesigye, Interview 4) These comprise mainly households, “[…] which just don’t have access to productive resources, which don’t have the ability to generate sufficient income.” (Joanne Bosworth, Interview 11)

There is also a link to the issue of chronic poverty. Chronic poverty is defined as

> […] poverty which traps individuals and households in severe and multi-dimensional deprivation for several years and is often transmitted across generations. […] This kind of poverty is characterized by its perpetual nature and persistence, the feeling of bare survival with no sign of escape, and an inability to resist shocks that lead to further impoverishments. (Development Research and Training 2006:1)

The target group of the SAGE programme comprises certain groups of chronically poor, who are particular vulnerable. Children, orphans, women, people with disabilities as well as the elderly are defined as vulnerable groups in Uganda. (Linda Nakakande, Interview 5)

The second instrument of the ESP programme is the policy component. The role of this component is to provide knowledge and information about social protection as well as raising awareness about the concept of social protection. The overall objective is also to develop a national policy, a framework for social protection. This comprises capacity building, providing training about social protection for policy-makers, raise awareness in the public to find a funding source and political support for social protection. (David Tumwesigye, Interview 4)

### 3 Background and history: The beginning…

There is a long history before the introduction of this programme and it was a hard way to get the pilot programme even started. Social protection was first mentioned in 2002, during the phase of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP). (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6) Only a few actors gave social protection some credits. There were some people of the MoGLSD, development partners like the Department for International Development (DFID) and only a few civil society actors, namely Development Research and Training (DRT), the Platform for

\(^1\) 23,000 UGX = 6,968,524 € (see [http://de.exchangerates.org.uk/kovertieren/EUR-UGX.html](http://de.exchangerates.org.uk/kovertieren/EUR-UGX.html), 4.10.2012)
Labour Action (PLA) as well as HelpAge (though, from the office of Kenya) interested in social protection. (Joanne Bosworth, Interview 11, Geoffrey Bamuteta, Interview 7)

Although, there was economic growth in Uganda at this time, there were many people, who had been excluded from this growth processes. The MoGLSD wanted to find out, “who these people are, what is causing their vulnerability, what is causing their lack behind.” (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6) Therefore, a Task Force was introduced in the very same year. Other members beside the MoGLSD were development partners, mainly DFID, as well as the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED). This Task Force commissioned a paper with the issue of vulnerability to find out, who these poor and vulnerable people were and what caused their poverty. It was this paper, which drew the conclusion that “[…] it was social protection, which was lacking, that would enable if you want the growth of the country.” (ebd.) Not only the ministry but also the former CEO of DRT was investigating on social protection at this time. (Beatrice Mugambe, Interview 1)

Although social protection was first mentioned in 2002, there were no efforts in pushing the debate forward until 2005. New members like the Ministry of Local Government and other donors joined the Task Force. (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6) This new motion in the social protection agenda was actually the result of the Livingstone conference in Zambia in 2005, where members of the MoGLSD were present, too. (Joanne Bosworth, Interview 11, Rebecca Ssanyu, Interview 1) “After the conference it has been a better understanding of this subject.“ (Rebecca Ssanyu, Interview 1) After the visit in Zambia, the ministry tried to introduce a cash transfer programme in Uganda in 2006. (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6; Joanne Bosworth, Interview 11, Rachel Waterhouse, Interview 8)

3.1 The first attempt to introduce a cash transfer programme in 2006

For the Task Force, it was of particular importance to reach those categories that were left out by past programmes. (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6) Theoretically, there were lots of programmes targeting the poor before, namely the Entandikwa programme, a microcredit programme initiated by President Yoweri Museveni in the 1990s or the Northern Uganda Social Action Funds (NUSAF), implemented in 2002 and mainly financed by the World Bank. These programmes basically focused on the economically active poor. (Golooba-Mutebi/Hickey 2009; Hickey 2003: 20) The chronically poor were always left out. DRT also highlighted the issue of chronic poverty in the Chronic Poverty Report in 2005. (Beatrice Mugambe, Interview 1; David Stewart, Interview 10) The introduction of a cash transfer programme was very difficult at this time because the concept and perceptions on social
protection were widely unknown in Uganda. “By then, social transfers were not very popular. It was not very common in the poverty agenda.” (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6) Due to this, the Task Force was working on a paper to clarify and convince the policy-makers about the concept of social protection. (ebd.) DRT was also involved in this process. (Rebecca Ssanyu, Interview 1) DFID commissioned a mainly international consultation to develop a cash transfer pilot programme. 10 % of the population should be covered within this programme. The donor was ready to finance the pilot programme with a contribution of four million pounds. The programme should be explicitly approved as a government led programme. Therefore, the approval of the MoFPED was necessary but the ministry rejected the programme. (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6) “The ministry of finance was not in an agreement with it going ahead. So, effectively they made it impossible to start.” (Joanne Bosworth, Interview 11) This programme would have been a high commitment and four million pounds from DFID were not enough for the MoFPED. Due to this reservation, the ministry referred to the cabinet, which should decide whether the cash transfer pilot programme should be approved. This time another commission paper for the cabinet was commissioned, which was sent to the cabinet in 2008. The cabinet did not approve the programme in the first place because there were too many open questions unanswered. (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6)

3.2 Causes for the failure: Challenges and controversial issues

The question of financial sustainability is a central issue. There is scepticism of the MoFPED regarding the financing of such a programme, though Rachel Waterhouse pointed out that financing a cash transfer programme is primary a question of political priorities than a question of financing. (Rachel Waterhouse, Interview 8) Another challenge concerned the targeting itself. How could the poorest 10 % of the population be identified? Furthermore, within the cabinet there was reservation about people giving money without conditions. There was a widespread believe that social protection and cash transfers would promote laziness. (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6; Geoffrey Bamuteta, Interview 7) Another myth which was believed to be true was social protection would put a strain on the economy, while “actually the evidence is that it stimulates the local economy.” (Rachel Waterhouse, Interview 8)

Social protection was not a priority issue at all at this time. In the pre-phase of the elaboration of the PEAP, there was a focus on poverty reduction, while in 2006 and 2007 another focus on wealth creation became popular. Now the focal point was on income generation, targeting the more economically active poor again. There was no real recognition of chronic poverty. (Joanne Bosworth, Interview 11) Programmes like Entandikwa or NUSAF agreed with the
predominantly understanding of how the poor should deal with poverty. “It was all about the stuff of microfinance […] very much the kind of paradigm than any formal rights based social protection.” (ebd.) Bosworth remembers a meeting on social protection where a member of the finance ministry told her not to talk about social protection “unless […] [she] can show exactly […] how much income it is going to generate”. (ebd.) The issue of chronic poverty became more prominent when there was still no improvement in the persistent high poverty rates in Northern Uganda. (ebd.)

David Tumwesigye of the ESP Secretariat clarified in the interview that it was not easy to sell cash transfer programmes, like SAGE, to the public. It was much easier to argue about the expansion of the SCG “[because] everybody is happy with senior citizens. Actually, they build the country. […] [S]enior citizens in Uganda it’s all likely widely accepted but those people who are vulnerable, who need support. It would be very hard to sell in the public.” (David Tumwesigye, Interview 4) When we think of the VFG, the target group is focused on people with limited labour capacity and high rates of dependency. The difficulty was to find a system to target the most vulnerable categories of people that will also be accepted in the public. (ebd.)

In interesting fact is that social protection was widely seen as a new phenomenon in Uganda, (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6) although fragmented social protection systems for the formal sector, like the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) or a national non-contributory pension system for civil service officers existed beforehand. (Ntale 2007) There was no understanding for cash transfer programmes. (Sulaiman Madada, Interview 2)

The key issue was that there was a lack of knowledge, a lack of understanding. […] The key issue is giving people cash is a new phenomenon, just giving, just giving for how long? We are not used to see the programme does not end. How can you give money and you don’t know when it ends? (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6)

People did not know what social protection actually is and how can it be distinguished from other social services because there are different ways to look at social protection. Some thought UPE (Universal Primary Education) or the Universal Health Care are social protection measures. (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6; Joseph Bitature, Interview 3; Linda Nakakande, Interview 5; Rebecca Ssanyu, Interview 1; Sharon Muhwezi, Interview 9) There was also a lack of understanding in the MoGLSD itself. “[T]he ministry of gender […] has seen social protection as all those activities that you do with vulnerable people and risks.“ (David Tumwesigye, Interview 4) Moreover, many civil society actors were not very familiar with the concept of social protection. Linda Nakakande from HelpAge Uganda mentioned that
she was not very interested in social protection because there were other programmes and sectors she was engaging in. (Linda Nakakande, Interview 5) Geoffrey Bamuteta from UCRNN clarified that in the social protection sub-committee, which was founded in 2008, was an initial scepticism and reservation about social protection. There were many civil society actors represented in the sub-committee, too. (Geoffrey Bamuteta, Interview 7) Some CSOs were particularly sceptical about cash transfer programmes. “To some extend there was a bit of discomfort from some civil society actors of the particularly use of cash. […] That cash is very disempowering.” (Joanne Bosworth, Interview 11) Social protection was also widely unknown in the population. “Also there is not so much understanding by the population. Some of them who are suffering, […] they have given up. There is one thing of apathy and people have given up.” (Joseph Bitature, Interview 3) This can be seen as a sign for the weak social contract between the state and its citizens.

3.3 Further developments until the introduction of the ESP programme

Another few years should pass from until the introduction of the ESP programme in 2010. As seen in the last chapter, Uganda had to face many challenges. DFID was eager to introduce a pilot programme and already had the money provided. (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6) Now the challenging task was to raise awareness about the concept of social protection among the political landscape as well as in the public. Various trainings and workshops for important actors in the country as well as abroad (e.g. at the Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC) in South Africa) took place. These trainings were especially provided for high-level politicians and policy-makers, such as one of my interview partners, Sulaiman Madada, the Minister of State for Elderly and Disability Affairs. He attended a workshop in South Africa, in order to understand the concept of social protection. (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6; Sulaiman Madada, Interview 2) Uganda was lacking of experiences with cash transfer programmes. Therefore, several papers with experiences from other countries with a similar economic situation were prepared. “We had a lot of policy briefs about the countries that have the same GDP as us but implementing social protection and they are affording it.” (Rebecca Ssanyu, Interview 1) In order to raise awareness about social protection and to make the important actors work together, they were brought together in the newly established social protection sub-committee. Among the members of the committee were important members of different ministries, e.g. the MoGLSD, the finance ministry and the Ministry of Public Services; as well as donors and members of civil society. (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6; Geoffrey Bamuteta, Interview 7; Linda Nakakande, Interview 5)
DFID arranged various study tours to other countries where cash transfer programmes have already been successfully implemented, in order to promote and raise awareness about social protection. The first study tour took place during the Livingstone conference on social protection in 2005. (Joanne Bosworth, Interview 11) High-level politicians and policy-makers should go abroad to learn about social protection and see how these programmes work. There were two major study tours in South Africa as well as in Lesotho afterwards. (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6; Linda Nakakande, Interview 5) The social pensions in these countries were mentioned as the best examples to refer in the European Development Report. (European Development Report 2010) Besides the social pensions, there are various other cash transfer programmes, like the Grants for Vulnerable Children in both countries. (The Expanding Social Protection Programme 2012c: 1) Besides the delegation of politicians, there was also a technical team comprising of members of the finance ministry, who were heading to Malawi to have a look at their cash transfer programmes. (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6) The last study tour to Brazil, which was organised by the ESP Secretariat, took place in March 2012. (Rachel Waterhouse, Interview 8)

Meanwhile, there was some motion within the finance ministry as well as the cabinet. People in the MoFPED were one of the biggest opponents in the social protection agenda. An important fact, which brought the whole agenda some motion, was the change of the minister. The former Minister of Gender was appointed to become the new Minister of Finance. (Joanne Bosworth, Interview 11; Rachel Waterhouse, Interview 8) “[S]he championed up the idea when she moved to the Ministry of Finance and pushed it through as an idea that she wanted to have into more depth.” (Rachel Waterhouse, Interview 8)

The cabinet introduced a small committee with selected ministers, “to go and study what this thing is, social protection.” (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6) Key ministers were identified and brought together in this committee, including the Third Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister for Public Service, the Minister of Finance, Minister of Defense, Minister of Local Government, Minister of Health as well as the Minister of Gender. Members of the MoGLSD were working with the cabinet. “[W]e had meetings, we gave them information, they read, they respond and understand so that they are able to defend it at cabinet.” (ebd.) Some of these ministers participated in a study tour. (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6; Linda Nakakande, Interview 5) In June 2010, the cabinet finally approved to introduce the pilot programme. (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6)
4 Analysis on the actors and social powers in the Ugandan social protection agenda

There seem to be various actors engaging in social protection and influencing the policymakers, who got the pilot programme started. Though, the essential question is who were the drivers of change in this agenda. First, the actors must be identified. Hickey’s model highlighted the connections between the politics and social protection as well as actors, which can be useful to identify the important actors.

(Hickey 2007: 3)

It is true that global factors and also civil society actors (who can be counted as social forces) have an influence on the policy-makers but the model is rather static. The pure existence of these actors does not say a lot of the real social powers and drivers, which pushed the debate further. In this case, there must be given reference to Esping-Andersen, who highlighted the relevance of the interaction and coalitions between the actors because there is not only a single causal force which is responsible for the introduction and a specific design of social protection measures. (see Esping-Andersen 1990) Different actor coalitions and interactions can lead to a very different design of such a programme. In European context, though very helpful for the analysis in Uganda too, Esping-Andersen stated that “[t]he actual historical formation of working-class collectivities will diverge, and so also will their aims, ideology, and political capacities.” (Esping-Andersen 1990: 29) There are indeed different actors in Uganda but the real contribution of Esping-Andersen is that it is about the coalitions,
interactions and cooperation between the actors, whose views, aims and ideology can diverge and therefore, lead to different social protection measures. This gives the whole analysis on actors a real dynamic view.

First, all the relevant actors will be identified. Then, there will be an analysis about their role in all the processes and interactions of these actors, in order to find out how the social powers are composed who led to the introduction of the ESP programme.

4.1 Government actors: The MoGLSD and the MoFPED

First of all, there are actors of the government, like the MoGLSD. Within this ministry, there were the Task Force on social protection as well as the social protection sub-committee working on social protection. Since it was founded, the ESP Secretariat is sub-ordered under the ministry. (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6; David Tumwesigye, Interview 4; Geoffrey Bamuteta, Interview 7; Rebecca Ssanyu, Interview 1) The Task Force was the initial force, which first highlighted social protection, though the impact on policy-makers was not that influential at this time due to the rejection of the first attempt to get a pilot programme even started in 2006. Then, there was the social protection sub-committee, which was founded in 2008, in order to mainstream social protection. Furthermore, the sub-committee’s role was to help the government to implement a social protection policy framework. There are various discussions about the concept of social protection in this sub-committee. (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6) It consists of approximately 40 members. (Geoffrey Bamuteta, Interview 7) Members are relevant ministries like the MoFPED and the Ministry of Local Government but also civil society actors, namely DRT and PLA, which have been engaging in social protection since the beginning as well as big umbrella organisations like Uganda Reach the Aged Association (URAA), Uganda Child Rights NGO network (UCRNN) and HelpAge as an international organisation. The donors, like DFID and UNICEF, are also participating in the sub-committee. (Geoffrey Bamuteta, Interview 7; Joseph Bitature, Interview 3) The ESP Secretariat, founded in March 2010, is responsible for the day-to-day management and implementation of the programme. (David Tumwesigye, Interview 4) The MoGLSD was always the first address in working together with DFID and it was also this ministry, which tried to implement a cash transfer programme in 2006. Rachel Waterhouse stated, though, that “[t]he Ministry of Gender seems to be in a very weak position.” (Rachel Waterhouse, Interview 8) The MoFPED has been a strong opponent on social protection all the time due to unclear questions of sustainability and widespread scepticism. Stewart also explained that usually ministries, like the MoGLSD, are in a weak position compared to the mighty finance
ministries. (David Stewart, Interview 10) The atmosphere actually changed, when a new Minister of Finance was elected. (see chapter 3.3 Further developments until the introduction of the ESP programme)

4.2 Political actors

On the side of ministers and members of parliament, there was only sporadic and weak engagement on social protection for a long time. "[P]olitical recognition [on] social protection, I don’t think that this really existed at all." (Joanne Bosworth, Interview 11) There were some references on the issue of social pensions from a few political leaders during election campaigns, with the exemption of ministers from the MoGLSD. (ebd.) Sulaiman Madada, for example, was one of the advocates on social protection among the ministers. (Geoffrey Bamuteta, Interview 7; Joanne Bosworth, Interview 11; Sulaiman Madada, Interview 2) "[I]t has been a pure technocratical debate." (Rebecca Ssanyu, Interivew 1) So, there was actually not an initial push by politicians. First, there was the need to raise awareness among the politicians. It was not until June 2010 that the cabinet finally approved the ESP programme. So, there was obviously a change in the position and reservation beforehand on social protection. Bosworth also stated that in the end it was an internal proves of the government of Uganda, which led to the approval of the programme. (Joanne Bosworth, Interview 11) The causes of this changed position will be further explored in chapter 4.4.

4.3 Participation of civil society actors

Some CSOs have been involved since the beginning, namely DRT, a research focused NGO, the Platform for Labour Action, which focuses issues with child labour, and HelpAge. These are represented in the sub-committee, too. (Geoffrey Bamuteta, Interview 7; Joanne Bosworth, Interview 11; Linda Nakakande, Interview 5; Sharon Muhwezi, Interview 9) Later on, other CSOs, like UCRNN, started engaging on social protection in 2008, when the sub-committee was founded. DRT highlighted the issue of chronic poverty in their Chronic Poverty Report in 2005. (Beatrice Mugambe, Interview 1; David Stewart, Interview 10) All of the CSOs have specific target groups, e.g. the elderly (URAA and HelpAge) or children (UCRNN) and thereby focusing on poverty issues. (Beatrice Mugambe, Interview 1; Geoffrey Bamuteta, Interview 7; Joseph Bitature, Interview 3; Linda Nakakande, Interview 5) The actors of civil society described their role in implementing and monitoring the programme as well as raising awareness. (ebd.) Furthermore, there is an online platform on social protection, where civil society actors can interact with each other on behalf of social protection.
Though, there are obviously civil society actors engaging in social protection, the question remains how strong and important these actors actually were. During the interviews, it became obvious that the CSOs were not the pushing drivers, who forced to introduce the pilot programme. First, the donors DFID and UNICEF were quite clear about the role of CSOs. (David Stewart, Interview 10; Joanne Bosworth, Interview 11; Rachel Waterhouse, Interview 8) Rachel Waterhouse stated that the participation of the civil society actors was very weak.

There was supposed to be a social protection platform, a civil society platform on social protection [...] but I think until today they hadn’t managed to come together to plan actions and strategy. [...] So far as I’m aware, there is a weak civil society on social protection. (Rachel Waterhouse, Interview 8)

Stewart and Bosworth also confirmed that this platform was not actively used and there is also no high level of organisation within the civil society. (David Stewart, Interview 10; Joanne Bosworth, Interview 11) “I think there is an openness, I think from everybody who is involved in this project in all these meetings and the civil society is involved but it doesn’t seem to be a cohesive force that is pushing.” (David Stewart, Interview 10) Their lack of building a cohesive force is probably due to their different interests and heterogenic target groups within their organisations. „[M]ost civil society organisations buy the definition of their mandate, focusing on vulnerable groups“. (ebd.) Bosworth also stated that “they were individual groups, they had particular positions.” (Joanne Bosworth, Interview 11) She sees a mixed participation. Some CSOs were interested in this issue “but […] they weren’t very clear what they wanted or what their role could be.” (ebd.) Second, there was also scepticism, concerning the particular use of cash transfer programme on the side of civil society. (see chapter 3.2 Causes for the failure: Challenges and controversial issues) Furthermore, Geoffrey Bamuteta explained that social protection trainings for the sub-committee from international experts were provided, in order to understand the concept of social protection. “[T]he sub-committee started […] by being trained […] because we had our reservations and founded criticism and fears about the agenda.“ (Geoffrey Bamuteta, Interview 7) So, for many civil society actors, social protection has been a new concept, too. Third, during my interview with Beatrice Okillan, a long-term officer within the MoGLSD and now ESP Secretariat, as well as Sulaiman Madada, a minister, it became implicit clear that although CSOs were involved in some of the processes, they were actually not the pushing drivers in bringing forward the agenda. While talking to them about the programme, its history and the background, they never explicitly mentioned activities of Ugandan civil society actors in the first place. Just when they were explicitly asked for the civil society participation, they confirmed that there
are CSOs and that they are working with them together. (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6; Sulaiman Madada, Interview 2) More prominence was given to other actors, besides the core ministries and the cabinet, the donors, in particular DFID, as well as actors which can be considered to be part of the South-South Cooperation. (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6)

4.4 Global actors

Among the external and global actors were the donors, especially DFID, which have been engaging in social protection in Uganda since the beginning. DFID was also represented in the Task Force in 2002 as well as the steering committee and the social protection sub-committee. (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6; Joanne Bosworth, Interview 11; Rachel Waterhouse, Interview 8) UNICEF and IrishAid are the other sponsors of the programme. Bosworth stated that UNICEF and IrishAid joined the social protection agenda in 2006 and 2007. (Joanne Bosworth, Interview 11) UNICEF mainly provided several trainings on social protection and technical help. (David Stewart, Interview 10; Joanne Bosworth, Interview 11) DFID focused on mainstreaming the concept and the understanding on social protection. (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6; Joanne Bosworth, Interview 11; Rebecca Ssanyu, Interview 1) DFID was closely working with the MoGLSD and also engaging with the MoFPED. (Rachel Waterhouse, Interview 8) “DFID supported the ministry to begin going out internationally to understand“. (Rebecca Ssanyu, Interview 1) During my interview with Beatrice Okillan focusing on the background and history of the ESP programme, she always mentioned DFID in almost all the processes. (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6) DFID sponsored trainings on social protection in the country and abroad. There were also international conferences on social protection, sponsored by DFID and other donors. (Joanne Bosworth, Interview 11; Rachel Waterhouse, Interview 8; Rebecca Ssanyu, Interview 1) It was all about raising awareness. “[T]he donors also supported us here to give information [to] the Ministry of Finance and understanding of what this programme is.” (ebd.)

Furthermore, DFID explicitly promoted the exchange of South-South experiences on social protection. This is where the important study tours must be mentioned. There were several study tours organised to other, mainly, African countries, to see their cash transfer programmes and the impact that social protection systems can achieve. This actually was a main driver in the Ugandan social protection agenda and a mighty instrument, in order to raise awareness among the policy-makers. The experiences of other countries provided the evidence that cash transfer programmes can actually help and all the myths surrounding social protection are not true. All this was explicitly and implicitly mentioned during my interviews.
First, the idea of implementing a cash transfer programme in 2006 originated from a visit at the Livingstone conference on social protection in 2005 and the study tour there. There were members of the MoGLSD represented in Zambia. (Joanne Bosworth, Interview 11; Rebecca Ssanyu, Interview 1) The members of this ministry were convinced very early, though there was a necessity to bring on board other important actors like the MoFPED as well as ministers from the cabinet. All study tours provided a huge contribution to change the negative image on social protection among the policy-makers. The minister who changed to the finance ministry to become the next Minister of Finance also participated in a study tour.

[T]he minister who had been the minister of gender, who was already very convinced of social protection and who had visited South Africa, had seen things working in other places and she was actually appointed to become the minister of finance. (Joanne Bosworth, Interview 11)

Ministers of the cabinet, who finally approved to introduce a pilot programme, went on a study tour, which led to a more internal process in Uganda.

[I]t was really the government of Uganda officials and various ministers who had already seen these programmes operating, who had to take that issue and make the case in cabinet and that was very much an internal government of Uganda process. (ebd.)

Stewart stated that the study tours, in particular the one to Lesotho which was co-sponsored by UNICEF, were an important instrument to influence and raise awareness among policy-makers. “I think seeing these things in action, is tremendously powerful.” (David Stewart, Interview 10) The politicians came back convinced from the study tours. “When they come back convinced […] then they try to influence their colleagues.” (Linda Nakakande, Interview 5) Sulaiman Madada participated at several study tours and attended trainings in the Economic Poverty Research Centre in South Africa. During the interview, he spoke with enthusiasm of social protection and the study tours. (Sulaiman Madada, Interview 2) He is also actively engaging in social protection to influence other politicians. At a field trip to Kiboga on 1 June 2012, which was organised for parliamentarians, in order to see how the programme is working, the minister held a speech to his colleagues, talking enthusiastic about the impact on social protection in Brazil, i.e. the reduction of the social inequality, because of the Brazilian cash transfer programme. (Sulaiman Madada at a speach on 1 June 2012)

However, Rachel Waterhouse attested a certain level of self-interest of the politicians, too. “[T]he politicians are actually seeing that the grant is very popular and it can be a vote winner. So, there was a kind of self-interest as well.” (Rachel Waterhouse, Interview 8)

Second, there were other measures of raising awareness, provided by global actors. As already mentioned, several trainings for the sub-committee were provided to explain the
concept of social protection. The reservation against cash transfer programmes were mitigating gradually after the trainings. These trainings and workshops were mainly held by international experts from other countries (of the global South). Geoffrey Bamuteta mentioned one expert from Namibia, who presented the experiences from his country. (Geoffrey Bamuteta, Interview 7) The experiences from other countries were from particular importance for the committee, too. “We had lessons from South Africa and the benefits that have come out. So, we realised that the benefits are much more than the costs of having it.” (ebd.)

Thanks to the trainings, instruments on social protection for Uganda were finally identified. “[D]uring those study sessions, we looked at the conceptualisation of social protection as defined by different actors […] and we were able to pick up what we think would be appropriate for Uganda.“ (ebd.)

Third, the lessons and experiences from other countries played a crucial role in bringing the social protection debate in Uganda forward. (Sharon Muhwezi, Interview 9) There were several comparisons with other countries to get convincing arguments for social protection. DRT, e.g. worked on comparative country studies on social protection. Therefore, countries with a similar economic situation as in Uganda were used, which already have implemented successfully social protection systems for the poor and vulnerable people. (Rebecca Ssanyu, Interview 1) In addition, Joseph Bitature stated the developments in Kenya on social protection. Kenya has expanded its social protection system due to the active engagement of the members in parliament. In this example, he sees the necessity to convince and influence the members of parliament in Uganda, too. (Joseph Bitature, Interview 3)

4.5 Social powers in Uganda: Conclusion

It turned out that strong external forces pushed the social protection agenda in Uganda, in which external actors like donors and actors part of the South-South Cooperation played a key role in lots of processes. This was the prerequisite to push the agenda forward. The study tours, financed by the donors as well as the experiences of social protection systems in other countries pushed the social protection debate further and convinced the policy-makers to implement the ESP programme. Not only policy-makers needed to be convinced about social protection but also civil society actors, with a few exceptions, were very sceptical at the beginning.
The widespread scepticism about social protection and cash transfer programmes among politicians changed after the journeys to other countries. Other African countries acted as examples due to their similar economic situation compared to Uganda. Lots of myths surrounding social protection could be disproved during these study tours and finally convinced the cabinet to implement a pilot programme. Though, mentioned by Hickey, the election cycles played only a minor role in implementing the programme. The focal topics were mainly about wealth creation and programmes targeting the economically active poor for a long time. The target group of SAGE though, were people with limited labour capacity and high dependency as well as the elderly. The politicians who participated on these study tours actually did see the popularity of such programmes. „[E]vidence globally show[s] that social protection brings a lot of benefits, probably also the sense […] that it can also bring political benefits as well.“ (Rachel Waterhouse, Interview 8) Still, the whole debate before the introduction of this programme was mainly technocratic, as stated by Rebecca Ssanyu.

5 Current developments: A shift in the social powers?

The approval and the implementation had been a real success, though there are still many more challenges Uganda must face. The overall goal is to finally expand the pilot programme to the whole country but scepticism is still persistent in the country. The current Minister of Finance is among the sceptics. (Rachel Waterhouse, Interview 8) Stewart remembers a speech during the launch of the programme held by a government member, where he could hear his scepticism and reservation about the programme, i.e. in comments like “[S]ome people are poor because they don’t work.“ (David Stewart, Interview 10) What’s more is that “[a] lot of different people are thinking like that.“ (ebd.) Nevertheless, the programme itself brought some new developments in motion.

During the interviews, it became clear that the programme itself brought a change in motion, which led to forming new social powers in Uganda. Several interview partners described the introduction of the ESP programme as a major milestone in the Ugandan social protection agenda. (David Tumwesigye, Interview 4; Geoffrey Bamuteta, Interview 7; Rebecca Ssanyu, Interview 1) Hickey mentioned that there can be different actors responsible for the introduction of such programmes, while other actors get important in expanding them. (see Hickey 2007) The implementation of the programme was mainly pushed from external actors in the past. Now more internal forces and Ugandan actors are pushing the agenda than ever.
before. Before analysing the new social forces, the focus will be on recent successes and challenges.

5.1 Recent successes and current situation

The pilot programme has the important function of bringing evidence and contributing to the policy development process. (Linda Nakakande, Interview 5) Therefore, the pilot programme is confronted with high expectations. Though, examples from abroad showed the impact of such programmes, it is necessary to find the evidence that this programme is working in Uganda as well. “[E]ven when here is evidence in other countries, […] I think that the impact evaluation is really important”. (David Stewart, Interview 10) Moreover Stewart added that the people in Uganda “[…] are very open to evidence and to see what’s really happening.” (ebd.) Although the first cash transfers started in September 2011, positive impacts can be already noticed. “[I]t reaches out and targets the poor and vulnerable and gives them something tangible and so it kind of gives the government a visibility.” (David Tumwesigye, Interview 4) Several myths around social protection could be already disproved, i.e. the misuse of the money. „[T]he senior citizens have spent so well that the local politicians, the local governments are so impressed that they actually said that this is one of the best programme they have ever seen.“ (ebd.) The policy component plays a crucial role in bringing forward the development of national framework of social protection. A definition of what social protection in the Ugandan context means is already developed. According to David Tumwesigye social protection consists of four core instruments: Social assistance, social insurance, personal care services as well as measures to support the poor and vulnerable to access complementary services. (ebd.) At the moment the sub-committee is working on the development of a comprehensive social protection framework and policy in Uganda, which should be finished in 2013. (Geoffrey Bamuteta, Interview 7) Furthermore, trainings to raise awareness among politicians are still provided and field trips to the districts of the pilot programmes are organised by the ESP Secretariat, such as the one in Kiboga in June 2012. (Sulaiman Madada, Interview 2)

5.2 Current challenges

Uganda still must face many challenges. The issue of financial sustainability is still not handled. Social protection is a priority topic by now but still unfunded. (Beatrice Okillan, Interview 6, David Stewart, Interview 10) Furthermore, there are problems concerning the capacity at district level, in particular, lack of human resources. (David Tumwesigye,
5.3 Actors in the current social protection agenda

The implementation of the programme caused a change, which led to forge new social powers and drivers of change in Uganda. Social protection has very much become a more internal process in Uganda, though the new pushing actors are actually not new in the agenda.

5.3.1 The ESP Secretariat

One of the most important actors is the ESP Secretariat, which was established a few months before the approval of the ESP programme by the cabinet. The Secretariat helps the MoGLSD in providing the leadership of the programme. (David Tumwesigye, Interview 4) This Secretariat, which has staff from Uganda, but also international experts, has become a strong actor as stated by Stewart.

[T]he secretariat is incredibly strong. […] In other countries it would be UNICEF, who would be saying we have to put the schedule to do that. The ministry can do that now. So, our role then can be that much lesser. It’s more an advisory role than a leading role because the ministry has it under control. (David Stewart, Interview 10)

The donors take more the role of advisors by now. Representatives of civil society actors also referred to the Secretariat as an important actor. (Rebecca Ssanyu, Interview 1; Geoffrey Bamuteta, Interview 7) The ESP Secretariat actually organised the field trips in the districts as well as the last study tour to Brazil in March 2012. (Rachel Waterhouse, Interview 8) Before the introduction of the pilot programme, it had been the external actors, like the donors and South-South actors, who raised awareness among the policy-makers. Now the ESP Secretariat and the MoGLSD takes over this role. The leading role of the ESP Secretariat is also recognised by the MoFPED.

[T]hey have seen the analytical work we have done in the social protection policy […] and so some time last year they approached and said, would you be able to contribute to a chapter on the equality of opportunity on social protection in the poverty status report. (David Tumwesigye, Interview 4)
Besides that, the ESP Secretariat forces cooperation with the social protection sub-committee, research centres, universities as well as CSOs. David Tumwesigye explicitly mentioned the civil society actors DRT, HelpAge and the NGO forum. (ebd.) Civil society actors are playing an important role in monitoring the programme. (Linda Nakakande, Interview 5)

5.3.2 Public demand

The pilot programme has recently become very popular in the population. “It is very popular in the districts where it’s being implemented.” (Rachel Waterhouse, Interview 8) While there has not been much of a push in the population before the introduction of the programme, this situation changed now as it has been implemented. There is an increasing public demand to expand the programme to more districts. (David Tumwesigye, Interview 4; Joseph Bitature, Interview 3) “[T]he neighbouring districts, people in the neighbouring districts are also asking for it. I mean people in other districts hear about it. They want to be included“. (Rachel Waterhouse, Interview 8) The voices of the people become louder in order to expand the programme. “[T]he voices from older persons, the voices from organisations, the voices from human rights activists, they are saying it’s a good programme. Let it extend everywhere.“ (Joseph Bitature, Interview 3)

5.3.3 Political actors

The popularity of the programme brought the politicians on board as well. “So, in terms of advocacy, the pilot has generated demand, which is helping advance the programme.“ (Geoffrey Bamuteta, Interview 7) This is also due to the popularity of the programme. (David Stewart, Interview 10, David Tumwesigye, Interview 4) “There is emerging consensus among politicians that even before the pilot ends, the programme needs to be scaled up.” (David Tumwesigye, Interview 4) In particular local politicians and governments are impressed with the impact of the programme and how well i.e. senior citizens spent their monthly pension. (ebd.) Not only the local government but also more and more members of parliament are taking interest in this programme. According to Joseph Bitature, it is also about vote-catching. (Joseph Bitature, Interview 3) In the last months, a parliamentarian working group on social protection has been established; where around 70 parliamentarians are participating. (Rebecca Ssanyu, Interview 1) “It is now that SAGE is implemented in some districts that other politicians are saying, bring it to my district.“ (ebd.) Even if there is no money to cover the whole country at the moment, politicians prefer to have less sub-counties covered in a district, in favour of at least one sub-county of each district. (David Tumwesigye, Interview 4;
Rebecca Ssanyu, Interview 1) This can be seen as another sign for the orientation of vote-catching. Not only the ruling party, NRM, but also the opposition parties like FDC and DP have mentioned social protection in their manifestos, in terms of providing income generation for elder people. The interest in social protection has been raised in the political landscape. (David Tumwesigye, Interview 4; Geoffrey Bamuteta, Interview 7; Joseph Bitature, Interview 3; Rebecca Ssanyu, Interview 1; Sulaiman Madada, Interview 2) “[N]ow that even all the political parties are trying to pick it up, I’m sure the government and the subsequent want to make sure that it takes credit.” (Geoffrey Bamuteta, Interview 7)

The consent on social protection among ministers varies. According to Rachel Waterhouse, some of the ministers are very supportive but there are still some opponents, like the current Minister of Finance. (Rachel Waterhouse, Interview 8) This is mainly due to the uncertainty of financial sustainability. (David Stewart, Interview 10; Rachel Waterhouse, Interview 8) The problem of financing is still the very centre of the social protection agenda, though Sulaiman Madada, who is convinced of social protection, stated that “sustainability is not all about money. It is about people appreciating and understanding the role of social protection.” (Sulaiman Madada, Interview 2)

5.4 Conclusion

The external actors were the dominantly pushing forces in the past. Recently, there was a change. The dynamic of the programme brought a shift in the social powers, which led to a more internal process, where more Ugandan actors are pushing the agenda. Now the donors are taking over the role of the advisor. The impact of the programme so far, led to a rising public demand which brought the politicians on board. Furthermore, the programme brought the required evidence that there is no misuse of the money so far, which disproves again the myths and fears around social protection. There are many challenges, though. There is still scepticism, in particular in the MoFPED and although, social protection is a priority topic now, there is still no funding assured by the government.

6 Lessons learned and recommendations

The paper has shown that the exchange of South-South experiences played a crucial role of introducing the ESP programme in Uganda. This is an indication for the uprising importance of the South-South Cooperation in development cooperation and the changing nature of the development architecture itself – the shift from North-South to a stronger focus on South-
South cooperation. The study tours have been proven to be a mighty instrument to influence the policy-makers in Uganda to finally implement a pilot programme. Countries of the Global South are more and more seen as role models in terms of development efforts.

In terms of sustainability of the programme, the political will is very important. As it was highlighted in the previous chapters, the rising public demand already brought on board the politicians who are more engaging on social protection now. Still, there is a necessity to focus on a more bottom-up approach through strengthening the civil society in Uganda. It is of particular importance to get a more cohesive force from civil society to push the politicians in order to maintain and expand the programme. First of all, there is the issue of financing of CSOs. Joseph Bitature stated the precarious financial situation of some of its membership organisations, which results in a rather weak membership.

[S]ome of them lack many things. They don’t have an office. […] So, they don’t have a valid address and also most of them don’t have employed staff. […] So, since they have no employed staff who might be skilled, they miss out many things because you know, volunteers cannot do a good job sometimes.” (Joseph Bitature, Interview 3)

Furthermore, he stated that the donors prefer supporting mainly the government through budget rather than strengthen the civil society through financial support. (ebd.)

Second, there is the question of how to raise acceptance of social protection programmes across the society in Uganda. As stated by David Tumwesigye, there is the problem to sell cash transfer programmes like Vulnerable Families Grants to the public. This realisation is not surprisingly new. “[B]y destroying the public state services […] in the name of the poor, the politics of solidarity, which requires for […] [the] middle class in the name of the public provision that they fund, was to be made more difficult.” (Deacon 2009: 40) Deacon highlights the importance of cross-class alliances to maintain an overall acceptance in the population. “Required is a coalition that includes poor people and significant elements of the non-poor.” (ebd.) In case of Uganda, it was shown that there were more civil society actors participating on the programme, who are focusing on the poor and vulnerable groups. Though, DFID’s strategy focused on “social protection mainstreaming”, mainly government and state actors, like important ministries as well as CSOs mainly focusing on poor and vulnerable people, where included, e.g. in the social protection sub-committee. In order to raise cross-society acceptance in Uganda, cooperation with other actors should be taken in consideration, too, i.e. engaging with trade unions of the formal sector.
7 Literature


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