



**‘We the Children ...’
Positioning Children in Uganda’s National Development
Plan**

May 2008

Is the state fulfilling its commitment?

'The State shall endeavor to fulfill the fundamental rights of all Ugandans to social justice and economic development and shall, in particular, ensure that (i) all developmental efforts are directed at ensuring the minimum social and cultural well-being of the people; and (ii) all Ugandans enjoy rights and opportunities and access to education, health services, clean and safe water, work, decent shelter, adequate clothing, food security and pension and retirement benefits' - The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, Section XIV.

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ACRONYMS

| | |
|---------|--|
| AFC: | Action for Children |
| APRM: | African Peer Review Mechanism |
| BTVET: | Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training |
| CBGPM: | Community Based Growth Promotion Monitoring |
| CBOs: | Community Based Organizations |
| CDOs: | Community Development Officers |
| CWDs: | Children with Disabilities |
| CS BAG: | Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group |
| CSOs: | Civil Society Organizations |
| DfID: | Department for International Development |
| DRT: | Development Research and Training |
| ECD: | Early Childhood Development |
| EMIS: | Education Management Information Systems |
| ESA: | Education Standards Agency |
| GAIN: | Global Alliance for Improvement of Nutrition |
| GDP: | Gross Domestic Product |
| GoU: | Government of Uganda |
| HACI: | Hope for African Children Initiative |
| IDPs: | Internally Displaced Persons |
| IEC: | Information, Education and Communication |
| LCs: | Local Councils |
| ILO: | International Labour Organization |
| IPEC: | International Programme on Elimination of Child Labour |
| MDGs: | Millennium Development Goals |
| MoES: | Ministry of Education and Sports |
| MoFPED: | Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development |
| MGLSD: | Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development |
| MOH: | Ministry of Health |
| NAR: | Net Attendance Ratio |

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| | |
|---------|--|
| NCC: | National Council for Children |
| NDP: | National Development Plan |
| NFE: | Non Formal Education |
| NGOs: | Non Governmental Organizations |
| NSPPI: | National Strategic Programme Plan of Interventions |
| NSSF: | National Social Security Fund |
| OVCs: | Orphans and other Vulnerable Children |
| PAF: | Poverty Action Fund |
| PEAP: | Poverty Eradication Action Plan |
| PIDCs | People in Difficult Circumstances |
| PRDP: | Peace, Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda |
| PSWOs: | Probation and Social Welfare Officers |
| PVC: | Poor Vulnerable Children |
| SDIP: | Social Development Strategic Sector Investment Plan |
| SDS: | Social Development Sector |
| TSOs: | Technical Service Organizations |
| UAC: | Uganda AIDS Commission |
| UBOS: | Uganda Bureau of Statistics |
| UCRNN: | Uganda Child Rights NGO Network |
| UDHS: | Uganda Demographic and Health Survey |
| UDN: | Uganda Debt Network |
| UNCA: | Uganda National Children Authority |
| UNICEF: | United Nations Children's Fund |
| UNFPA: | United Nations Fund for Population Affairs |
| UNHS: | Uganda National Household Survey |
| UPE: | Universal Primary Education |
| USAID: | United States Agency for International Development |
| UPPAP: | Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Process |
| VS&L: | Village Savings and Loans |
| WFFC: | World Fit for Children |

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1. INTRODUCTION

Uganda ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1990. In May 2002, the UN Special Session on Children agreed to a World Fit for Children (WFFC) and more recently the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Translating these commitments into action requires their integration into national and sectoral plans and policies, including the National Development Plan.

Uganda Child Rights NGO Network (UCRNN) is a coalition of 95 child focused Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Uganda. UCRNN was formed in 1997 and has since then been at the forefront of monitoring the implementation of and adherence to child rights instruments at national, regional and international level. UCRNN has over the past 5 years engaged in processes aimed at informing Uganda's development plans. In 2003, UCRNN was one of the three (3) networks that coordinated CSO contribution to the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP). As a result, UCRNN published *'Uganda's Poor Vulnerable Children, the PEAP and the Rights of the Child: An analysis of the PEAP from a child rights perspective, proposals for action and recommendations for the next PEAP'*. UCRNN also engages in discussions and debates regarding the national budget and sectoral policies and strategies, which have led to a position paper: *'Uganda National Budget Proposal 2007/2008: Assessing the extent to which it provides for resources essential for the survival, development and protection of Children'* (December 2007) and a paper on *'Reorienting the SDIP to Provide Adequate Social Protection for Children'* (December 2007, unpublished). This year, Uganda is developing a National Development Plan (NDP) – a successor to the PEAP.

The PEAP has over the past 10 years represented Uganda's Poverty Reduction Strategy and Plan. The PEAP encompassed Government priorities aimed at reducing poverty and enhancing national development. With the 3rd PEAP coming to an end, the Government of Uganda plans to continue guiding national development through the NDP. This issues paper presents UCRNN's contribution to the NDP process under Working Paper 4 (Social and Cultural Development) Sub-Section 4.3 (Children, Youth and the Elderly), with a special focus on Children.

1.1. Definition of concepts

- **Poverty** is multi-dimensional and integrated. It is not just the lack of income. It is the inability to satisfy a range of basic human needs and stems from powerlessness, social exclusion, ignorance and lack of knowledge as well as shortage of material resources¹.
- **Poverty as Powerlessness** is seen in terms of lack of participation, voicelessness, unmet aspirations, gender discrimination and poor governance.²
- **Poverty as social exclusion** is evident where a particular group may be excluded from accessing certain benefits and services or they are never heard in community meetings³.

¹ UPPAP II

² UPPAP II, p 11

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- **Child poverty** is where children grow up in households with inadequate resources to provide for their material needs; where families and communities are unable to nurture and protect them and where children are unable to develop their full potential⁴. Child poverty is also characterized by powerlessness, social exclusion, and lack of knowledge.
- **Poor children:** for purposes of this report, poor children are those who suffer child poverty.
- **Poor vulnerable children (PVC):** for purposes of this report, these are poor children who are further made vulnerable by the nature of their circumstance.

1.2. Common misconceptions of child poverty

- **Children's poverty is the same as household poverty;** Do we know enough about intra-household dynamics to be able to say that a rich household means rich children? Children's interests are not always synonymous with those of adults; poverty does not impact on a child the same way it does on the household⁵.
- **Policies to address household poverty will automatically benefit children;** *The Silent Majority* found that the welfare of poor children appears to be deteriorating, rather than following the trend of general poverty reduction. The tendency to focus on household/family poverty does not provide information that would allow for interventions to halt this trend. Policies to tackle absolute household poverty will not target the children therein.
- **Children are not independent economic agents – their perspective is therefore not relevant;** *The Silent Majority* found that children are very much part of the economic fabric both in terms of child-headed households and the contribution working children make to the household economy. In addition, because children are impacted upon most by poverty, their perspectives are relevant and they require urgent attention.
- **Investing in poor children does not directly address poverty;** A major thrust of the PEAP and the related Poverty Action Fund (PAF) was to focus on interventions that **directly** address poverty. It has been argued that investing in vulnerable groups, more so poor children, is not directly addressing poverty but is rather a social welfare intervention. UCRNN believes that because 62% of Uganda's most populous age group are vulnerable, addressing the vulnerability directly addresses poverty.

³ UPPAP II, p 12

⁴ *What is child poverty?* SC UK p2

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⁵ *The Silent Majority*, SC (UK) p1.

1.3. From “Poverty Eradication” to “National Development”: Is there a conceptual shift?

For the past 10 years, the document that guided Uganda's development focused on ‘Poverty Eradication’. This year, Uganda is developing a ‘Development Plan’. Is there a conceptual shift? According to PEAP III (2004/5 – 2007/8), during the 1990's income poverty fell drastically from 56% in 1992 to 44% in 1997/8. In 2000, income poverty was at 34%. Unfortunately, even with the fall in income poverty and growth of GDP, inequalities increased. Between 1997 and 2000 the expenditures of the poorest 10% rose by just 8.3% while that of the richest 10% rose by 20%. Something was wrong. Raising incomes does not necessarily translate to national development.

UCRNN welcomes the shift of focus away from poverty eradication to national development. Eradication of poverty is a noble goal for any country to set and work to achieve. The challenge that UCRNN has faced in advocating for the well-being of children within a ‘poverty eradication’ framework was the continued reference to income poverty as the main focus and as a result the focus on raising incomes as a key solution. The much hyped ‘dollar-a-day’ measure hazes the fact that a family that could be living on 3 dollars-a-day may be unable to access education, safe and clean water, quality health care and may be living in a conflict-ridden environment.

UCRNN continues to maintain that the multifaceted face of poverty requires multi-faceted approach to tackling it. Poverty viewed from an income perspective has a strong tendency of leaving children out of the plans and strategies to address poverty because they, in a majority of cases, do not earn an income. Children were therefore seen only as beneficiaries of major national plans and were thus relegated to the periphery of national poverty response. But this potentially changes with a shift to ‘Development’.

The shift away from poverty eradication to development means that it is not only the income that is of concern but the ability to satisfy a range of basic human needs and rights. This is critically important for children because the needs of children, as manifested in their rights, are integrated and interdependent. A child would not grow and develop to his full potential if his/her survival, development, participation and/or protection are jeopardized. For children, ‘development’ encompasses all these aspects and if addressed gives the vulnerable children a real chance to get out of poverty and develop to their fullest potential.

In shifting to ‘Development’ however, Uganda is giving itself a challenge. In its engagement with Ministry of Finance and the budgetary processes, UCRNN has constantly been asked to ‘measure’, ‘quantify’ and ‘cost’ its interventions and proposals. Whereas this is not a bad thing, interventions to improve the wellbeing of children such as ‘psychosocial support’, ‘participation (inclusion)’, ‘expression of opinion’, ‘empowerment’, ‘opportunity’, ‘nurturing’ etcetera are not exactly the easiest things to ‘measure’, ‘quantify’ and ‘cost’ in a traditional manner and yet they form an integral part of children's well-being and development. In choosing to turn from poverty eradication to national development, the Government of Uganda should be ready to face up to the fact that these factors are essential to development – measurable or not. The major thrust should be geared at incorporating these factors into

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policies, strategies and plans and resources made available to turn them into practical action. As the hub around whom all the development factors collate, children and their well-being are the perfect measure for development. A successful development plan would ultimately be measured by the well-being of the children in the country: 'The well-being of children is a key yardstick for measuring national development' (UNICEF, 2001; p1). This assertion is further strengthened by the fact that 6 of the 8 MDGs directly affect children.

The MDGs are a popular measure of progress towards development.

Table 1: Summary of Uganda's progress toward the MDGs

| | Millennium Development Goal | Relationship to the child in Uganda |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger: | Of the total number of children in Uganda, about 41% live in poor households and of the 9.5 million Ugandans below the poverty line by 2003, 60% were children below 18 years (UBOS 2005). |
| 2 | Universal Primary Education | About 91.7% of Uganda's children 6-12 years are enrolled in primary school (EMIS 2006). The country now faces the challenges of ensuring quality and retaining enrolled children for completion of the school cycle. Currently completion rates are less than 50%. |
| 3 | Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women | Whereas the gross enrollment rate at primary school showed a gender ratio of 51 boys to 49 girls, the highest numbers of school dropouts are girls. |
| 4 | Reduce Child Mortality | Child mortality in Uganda has remained unacceptably high at 76/1000 live births while infant mortality stands at 76/1000 (UDHS, 2006). |
| 5 | Improve Maternal Health | 1 in every 230 expectant mothers dies before or during child birth. This has reduced slightly from 1 in every 198 in 1991 |
| 6 | Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases | Malaria remains the highest cause of child morbidity and mortality. Uganda is home to approximately 2 million orphans most due to HIV/AIDS. |

Source: UN in Uganda 2007; UCRNN 2007; P.5

2. CHILDREN AND THE PROPOSED NDP OBJECTIVES

Children constitute over 50% of Uganda's population and unfortunately they are also the majority of those who are living in poverty. Population projections for 2005 mid-year, the total number of children aged less than 18 years was 15 million and expected to rise to 19.5 million by 2010. Of the total number of children in Uganda, about 41% live in poor households and of the 9.5 million Ugandans below the poverty line by 2003, 60% were children below 18 years (UBOS, 2005). Added to this is the growing number of orphaned and extremely vulnerable children resulting largely from the AIDS pandemic, conflict and disease. 'These issues carry with them intergenerational consequences of enormous magnitude, with higher rates of fertility, infant mortality and unemployment, and lower levels of education, health and nutrition' (World Bank, 2001).

The World Bank notes that children and youth represent the greatest leverage point for investments in human capital and the principal means by which to reduce intergenerational poverty. They represent both the greatest opportunity and a potential time bomb for current development strategies⁶.

Uganda is proposing to have 6 development objectives for the next 5 years. These are:

1. To uplift household standards of living
2. To enhance the quality and availability of gainful employment
3. To improve social, economic and trade infrastructure
4. To develop efficient, innovative and internationally competitive industries
5. To develop and optimally exploit the natural resource base and ensure environmental and economic sustainability
6. To strengthen good governance and improve human security

How do these objectives relate to children?

This paper makes a detailed analysis and recommendations on two of the five objectives—improving household standards of living and enhancing the quality and availability of gainful employment.

2.1. To uplift household standards of living

UCRNN commends the focus on household standards of living rather than household incomes. Household standard of living denotes the fact that other factors aside from income determine the well-being of the household.

Poverty begets poverty. It is out of poor households that street children are born, children engage in child labour and where children are most adversely affected by HIV/AIDS and preventable disability. Among the poorest households in this country are child headed households. It is households with poor standards of living that cannot access education, adequate and nutritious food, medical care, clean water and sanitation and cannot find space to participate in governance. 'These issues carry with them intergenerational consequences

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⁶ World Bank, 2004

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of enormous magnitude, with higher rates of fertility, infant mortality and unemployment, and lower levels of education, health and nutrition' (World Bank, 2004)

If we are to stem the regeneration of poor household standards of living for future generations, we need to focus strategies on helping the children trapped in this pitiful situation and preventing the creation of circumstances that lead to it. Given that children are a long-term investment, they represent the highest leverage point for investments to build human capital. These investments also maximize social mobility and are the principal means by which to reduce intergenerational poverty. To uplift household standards of living, Uganda must focus more proactively in fighting intergenerational poverty by investing in its poor and vulnerable children.

In order to uplift household standards of living, the Government of Uganda wants to increase household income, food security and nutrition, quality education, health, decent housing, social networks, and to have an improved asset base (MoFPED, 2007). These are discussed below in relation to children.

2.1.1. Increase Household Incomes

To increase household incomes for poor households that will translate in an improved standard of living for the children in those households, UCRNN proposes that the Government focuses on the following 3 key issues:

- (1) Women's access to micro-finance/credit
- (2) Explore an efficient and effective social protection system
- (3) Women's employment. This is discussed alongside provision of early childhood care in section 2.2.

Women's Access to Micro-finance and children's well-being

In a study done in Bangladesh by Ahmed (undated), micro-credit (a) increased family income and quality of life (b) promoted saving habits among poor women borrowers; (c) raised awareness and empowered women to contribute to various socio-economic activities; and (d) motivated women to take an active role in the political spheres.

A similar study in the same country by the World Bank survey conducted for the mid term review of the Poverty Alleviation and Microfinance Project for Bangladesh among 675 micro-credit borrowers showed that there had been a positive change in the economic and social status of the surveyed borrowers. The survey showed that income had increased for 98% of borrowers; 89% of the borrowers accumulated new assets and 29% of borrowers had purchased new lands either for homestead or for agriculture use; food intake, clothing and housing conditions had improved for 89%, 88% and 75% borrowers respectively; sanitation conditions had improved for 69% of borrowers; and child education had improved for 75% of borrowers. **The study attributed the improvements to an increased level of self-employment of women.**

Micro credit programs in rural areas that target women have also proved that increasing women's incomes increases household standard of living. A good example is CARE's

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Village Savings and Loans (VS&L) programs. VS&L are Savings is an informal microfinance model that builds capital and increases household incomes. It combines financial services with education, awareness raising and training on vital development issues such as women's rights, health, education, HIV/AIDS etcetera.

In Malawi, an impact evaluation that was done for CARE Malawi's VS&L reported that VS&L program has helped to alleviate poverty and improve the welfare of the members particularly women who are the majority in the VS&L groups, (Anyango et al, 2005). According to the report poverty levels were lower at baseline than at the time of evaluation. For example, 89% of the households were in the poor category (with 63% being very poor and 26% being poor) as at baseline, but after participating in VS&L the evaluation found 72% of the VS&L groups were in the poor category, (with 10% being very poor) as at baseline. The impact assessment showed that the poor categories had reduced to only 5% among the VS&L groups, a reduction of more than 67%. Similarly only about 29% and 0% of the VS&L groups were in the moderate and better off categories as at baseline. In the impact assessment the moderate category had grown to reach 62% of the groups while better off had also gained to 33% of the VS&L groups in the survey, an indication of mobility from the very poor and poor categories to the upper categories of moderate and better off for the VS&L groups.

Work done by CARE on VS&LA shows that there are linkages between VS&L approach and the well-being of OVCs. This is because several studies have proved the link between women's well-being and children. OVC in households where women are engaged in VS&L benefit from improved household incomes; the social fund that the model provides supports the households in times of emergencies and this is mainly used for children; the internal social pressure of the group encourages women to improve the well-being of their children and a majority of the loans are used to cater for OVCs needs⁷. The VS&L approach also benefits women and children through 'needs realization', e.g. the women realize that they and their children need skills training and that the community needs to support OVCs etcetera. The VS&L provides an opportunity to reach OVCs as the group methodology is conducive for the provision of OVCs technical support, knowledge and information and as an entry point for 'collective dialogue, problem-solving, and action' for OVCs. This linkage shows that when women are supported to earn an income, their children have a better opportunity to break out of the poverty category they find themselves in. Investing in women is an investment in the children.

2.1.2. Provide Social Protection

The nature of the society we live in is a reflection of how we nurtured and invested in our children. Prosperity for all comes from an environment that provides equal opportunities to all children to develop to their fullest potential and provides support systems and structures for those who fall through the cracks. Be it economic, social, political or cultural prosperity, the roots lie in meeting the rights and needs of our children and providing them a caring and nurturing environment in which to grow and thrive. "Rapid economic growth without equity can perpetuate poverty (UNICEF, 2000; P.16)

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Although it is argued that all children are vulnerable, there are those who are more vulnerable than others. These are children who are in need of special protection measures. In the Government programs and plans, children in need of special protection are catered for in the Social Development Sector under the auspices of MGLSD. The Social Development Sector (SDS) is carved out of the social sector and mandated to address the needs of people in difficult circumstance. Children largely constitute this category. The Social Development Sector Strategic Investment Plan (SDIP) specifically mentions orphans, street children, children engaged in child labour, children in armed conflict among People in Difficult Circumstances (PIDCs). Based on this plan, progress has been made for children over the past 5 years. These are discussed below by output.

Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Reintegration (SDIP Output 2.1)

Progress

Output 2.1 of the SDIP was to have PIDCs rehabilitated, resettled, reintegrated, assisted and empowered to participate in development initiatives. Under this output, the Government planned to develop policies, strategic plans, tools, manuals, standards and guidelines. These have been developed for OVCs. Awareness sessions at community level have been held and programs for skills development continue around the country, being delivered by CSOs. Support- tacit, moral, financial and otherwise continue to be provided to various NGOs and CBOs providing social protection services to vulnerable children; children affected by conflict and HIV/AIDS continue to receive kits, packages and services for reintegration and to support them to become self-sufficient. The MGLSD has continued to play a central role in this response. It has had an OVC Secretariat established and functional and occasionally convenes Technical Resource Committees made up of various stakeholders to plan and coordinate interventions.

A lot of these achievements for vulnerable children are largely attributed to donor funding especially for HIV/AIDS affected OVCs and children affected by conflict. Here in lies a major challenge. Though labeled OVCs the wide support to children and MGLSD is largely meant to reach children orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS. Other vulnerable children are therefore not targeted and are left in the periphery of national development. These include among others children with disabilities, street children, children engaged in child labour and those in conflict with the law. In its Estimated SDIP budget projections for 2003/04 – 2007/08, PIDCs was projected to utilize 45% of the SDS budget. Of this 33% was for the programs for orphans and youth. Following this was 03% for children in armed conflict! The other children's programs were projected to use only 1% each of the paltry SDS budget.⁸

Huge resources that are provided outside of the national budget tend to challenge long-term national ownership and sustainability. For example, the Presidential Emergency Fund for Aids Relief (PEPFAR) grant that is going to OVCs here in Uganda has been considerable. As indicated in the figures above, it provides 35% for HIV/AIDS affected OVCs while

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other vulnerable children barely get 1% of the SDS budget. Though the large financial support is appreciated since the response has been more adequate as a result, there is the accompanying challenge in giving such large amounts, especially those that are channelled independently of national governments, of reducing the likelihood that the national government will utilise its own financial resources to support vulnerable children. While this may be pragmatic in the short term, the lack of domestic resources undermines the potential for a consistent long-term response for children.⁹

Opportunities

However, the goodwill currently pertaining toward meeting the needs of children orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS presents a unique opportunity for all vulnerable children in Uganda. It is the case that a child who is usually denied one right as a result suffers abuse and neglect of other rights as well. A child mother for example is more likely to be out of school, at higher risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, be engaged in child labour and is prone to higher health risks. This interdependency of children's needs provides the government an opportunity to target all vulnerable children under the auspices of dealing with HIV/AIDS. MGLSD has seen more money than it has in a long time available solely to the cause of children as it has with the coming of support to fight the HIV/AIDS scourge. This should be capitalized on to reach a wider catchment of children.

In addition to this, UCRNN strongly believes that the MGLSD should go further and develop a National Social Protection Policy that will provide a safety net for all vulnerable children, irrespective of the cause of vulnerability.

Safety Nets (SDIP Output 2.2)

Output 2.2 of the SDIP hoped to see safety nets for PIDCs put in place and operational (MGLSD 2004). The CSO Position paper on Social Protection elaborates the position of safety nets for PIDCs¹⁰. It notes that 'Despite Uganda's promising economic growth rate and poverty reduction efforts¹¹, social exclusion of the most vulnerable groups and communities has continued unabated. Rising income poverty and inequality is one manifestation of this problem. According to the Uganda Chronic Poverty Report (2005) 26% of the total population of Uganda (about 7 million people) lives in chronic poverty, and are generally unaffected by current development interventions. People living in chronic poverty include but are not limited to: people with disabilities; widows; the elderly with no social support; orphaned and neglected children; street children; those affected by HIV/AIDS (especially in instances where the bread winner is ill or has died); ...' (CSO Position Paper on Social Protection)

⁹ UNICEF study (yet to be published)

¹⁰ Social protection for Uganda's most vulnerable and chronically poor: Issues, challenges and options

¹¹ Poverty levels in Uganda have been gradually falling from 56% in 1992, to 35% in 2000 and averaging 31% in 2006

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Progress

Orphans and other vulnerable children continue to benefit from support programs by various providers. Within the framework of the Orphans and other Vulnerable Children's Policy and its attendant National Strategic Programme Plan of Interventions (NSPPI), programs to reach OVCs in the Core programme Areas of Health, Education, Psychosocial Support, provision of Care and Support and economic enhancement have been and continue to be implemented. Capacity building of especially community and faith based organizations to provide care and the MGLSD, USAID and CORE Initiative programme is undertaking support for children who are unable to access services. Through this initiative Technical Service Organizations (TSOs) have been identified for each region, to provide support and training to key OVC stakeholders at the district level. This is as per the MGLSD's plan to develop and operationalise an institutional mechanism for effective implementation of care and support programs.

Challenges

Currently, safety nets for vulnerable children in Uganda are embedded in the social and administrative structures such as the Local Councils (LCs) and in universal national programs like UPE, national school feeding programs etcetera. However, the poorest of the poor still fall through the nets. The porous nature of safety nets for children in difficult circumstances are found in the poor resourcing of the structures and systems meant to support the most poor and vulnerable children in our communities. As a result, there are limited safety nets. There are widespread ad hoc initiatives that reach a selected few with questionable quality of services. What is required is a national safety net that provides equitable services and opportunities for all vulnerable children. A lot remains to be done to strengthen the role of LCs in providing protection for vulnerable children. With the establishment of TSOs, this has begun but the sustainability is yet to be established.

Opportunity

• Debate on Cash Transfers

There is a current discussion around **Cash Transfers** as a strategy for getting much-needed resources to the vulnerable. Cash Transfers are being piloted by United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DfID) but are considered controversial by many. Cash Transfers involve developing a criteria that would determine who should benefit, identifying people who fit this criteria, reaching these people with the provision of cash. Targeting social safety nets is a response to the challenges of addressing wide spread poverty in a holistic manner; allowing for efficiency and flexibility, minimal leakage to the non-poor and offering rapid anti-poverty intervention (UNICEF, 2000; P.34). UNICEF however goes on to point out that there are hidden costs that are usually overlooked.

Because poverty is complex and multi-faceted, it is virtually impossible to identify those who qualify; narrowly targeted programs often bypass the poorest; the poor are usually less informed about safety nets and they are 'at least twice as expensive to administer', require extra oversight and cost and the political will for them is usually weak (UNICEF, 2000, P. 34 – 35). These concerns have borne themselves out in Malawi for example.

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UCRNN advises that before the Government adopts Cash transfers, the pros and cons are studied carefully, so that the social networks of support to vulnerable groups that exist out of communities caring for their own are not broken as a result and that the government does not venture into an initiative it would not be able to sustain. A well thought out process could however, benefit households affected by HIV/AIDS, CWDs, child and elderly headed households.

• National Social Security System

UCRNN nevertheless, commends the Ministry of Gender for including in its SDIP the plan to develop a national social security system and review the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) Act of 1985. Unfortunately, in the Output Performance of the Ministry for the year FY 2004/05 no mention was made on the progress of this activity. The reform of the national social security system should be a Government priority and all efforts should be made to enable tailor it to children in need of special protection. The CSO Paper on Social Protection makes a good case for reforming the Pension System (CSO Position Paper, 2008) and these should be considered.

Recommendations

UCRNN therefore makes the following recommendations:

- Government needs to direct micro-finance to poor rural and urban women and ensure gender sensitive micro-credit schemes.
- Any review or development of the National Social Security System needs to include children in it as an active target group requiring social security.
- UCRNN agrees with the CSO Social Protection recommendations that the social security system should not limit itself to the formal sector but should include those engaged in the informal sector as well. This is because many of the poor families are engaged in the informal sector other than the formal sector.
- The MGLSD should develop a National Social Protection Policy that will provide a safety net for all vulnerable children, irrespective of the cause of vulnerability.
- Government should commit local resources for OVCs to supplement external grants as a long term sustainability mechanism.
- Funds allocated for vulnerable children through PEPFAR should target all vulnerable children as detailed in the NSPPI.
- Government should implement the proposed cash transfer scheme through a robust implementation strategy.

2.1.3. Food Security and Nutrition

Progress

The importance of adequate and nutritious food for the growing child cannot be underestimated. Under-nutrition places children at increased risk of illness and death and has also been shown to be related to impaired mental development. According to the Ministry of Health Policy Statement 2007/8, various policy guidelines have been developed in the areas of infant and young child feeding, prevention, control and management of conditions

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arising from nutrition inadequacy. The ministry has also developed and disseminated IEC materials to create awareness; conducted nutrition assessments, submitted and got approval of the proposal to the Global Alliance for Improvement of Nutrition (GAIN), supported nutrition programmes run by World Food Programme (WFP) and Scaled up Community Based Growth Promotion Monitoring (CBGPM). Uganda has a comprehensive Food and Nutrition Policy that spells out goals, objectives and strategies to achieve desired food security levels and adequate nutrition. The above efforts notwithstanding, nutritional indicators for children are still appalling. In fact 50% of the under five deaths in Uganda are attributed to underlying malnutrition (MOH Policy Statement 2007/08). According to the 2006 UDHS, 5% of children were wasted at the time of the survey¹². 1 in every 5 children is under weight which reflects the effects of both acute and chronic under-nutrition.

Challenges

The lip service to the agricultural sector; Agriculture which potentially has a bearing on the economic situation of the country and the nutritional status of children is critically under funded. In FY 2006/7, it received 90.82 billion shs which is a share of 3% of the total national budget. Although there was increase in the budget allocation for 2007/8 to 108.96 billion shs, the sector share in relation to the national budget remained at 3%. This may be directly related to the decline in the contribution of Agriculture to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). According to the Background to the Budget FY 2007/08, the share of agricultural production to total GDP at basic prices (factor cost) has continued to decline over the years. The current share is 31.9% down from 42% in 1997/98.

Regional and social disparities; Nutritional statistics vary by background characteristics of children. For example, rural children are almost 50% more likely to be stunted and 54% more likely to be underweight than urban children. By region, the proportion of children who are underweight ranges from 12 percent in Kampala to 28% percent in the North. In Karamoja this proportion rises to 49%. From a rights perspective, these variations are not acceptable as children must have adequate nutrition irrespective of region or setting. The mothers' level of education attainment also has significant impact on the nutritional status of their children. Women with secondary education or higher are less likely to have children who are stunted or underweight than women who have no education or primary education. This obviously means that investment in the education of girls would go a very long way to enhance the survival of children.

Recommendations

- Progressively increase budgetary allocations for agricultural sector with a bias for rural areas to at least 10% of the national budget.
- Invest in education of girls.
- Scale up nutritional education.

¹² Wasting is failure to receive adequate nutrition in the period immediately before the survey and is typically a result of recent illness episodes especially diarrhoea

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- Carry out nation wide dissemination and implementation of the National Food and Nutrition policy.

2.1.4. Quality Education

Progress

Government is commended for the introduction of UPE in 1997 and more recently Universal Secondary Education (USE) in 2007. Net enrolment in primary schools has increased from 86.7 in 2003 to 91.7 in 2006 with a ratio of 49 girls to 51 males (MoES, 2006). Some of the interventions introduced to promote quality of primary education include the thematic curriculum for lower primary, enhancement of teachers' salaries, introduction of literacy hour in the time table, customized performance targets for head teachers and their deputies and continuation of hardship allowance for teachers in hard to reach areas of the country (MoES, 2007). The Government has also made progress with regard to Vocational Skills Training under the BTVET programme and developed Early Childhood Development (ECD) Policy for the education sector. The proposed emphasis on quality education is welcome. In the FY 2006/7, the Education sector got the lion's share of the National Budget – 24%.

Table 2: Trend of National Budget Allocations by Sector (Billion shs)

| Sector | FY 2006/7 | Sector Share | FY 2007/8 | Sector Share |
|------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Security | 376.73 | 13% | 443.24 | 14% |
| Roads and works | 178.53 | 6% | 289.89 | 9% |
| Agriculture | 90.82 | 3% | 108.96 | 3% |
| Education | 683.60 | 24% | 717.80 | 22% |
| Health | 242.62 | 9% | 275.44 | 8% |
| Water | 70.00 | 2% | 92.72 | 3% |
| Law and Order | 189.97 | 7% | 229.13 | 7% |
| Accountability | 87.98 | 3% | 125.77 | 4% |
| EF and SS | 356.95 | 13% | 398.88 | 12% |
| Public Sector Management | 235.89 | 8% | 246.07 | 8% |
| Public Administration | 300.83 | 11% | 322.89 | 10% |
| Total (excl Interest) | 2,813.92 | 100% | 3,250.79 | 100% |

Source: MoFPED, UCRNN 2007 P.13

Challenges

Access; Estimates indicate that 1.3 million children have never attended any formal education (UNICEF, 2006).

High drop out rates; In spite of the introduction of UPE and the allocation of 67%¹³ of the education budget to primary education, school drop out rates remain high (73% of girls and 70% of boys). Some of the reasons for this are the additional monetary costs and factors that fall outside the school structure – and are within the remit of the SDS to

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address. The UNHS 2006 identified helping at home/family business and indifference to education as high-ranking reasons as to why children of primary school going age were not in school. Indifference to education and sickness and calamity were high-ranking reasons after cost, for dropping out of school. These factors lie within the communities and need to be addressed from that perspective. Uganda's progress in UPE and of recent USE is blemished by the fact that poor and vulnerable children continue to be left out of the system – especially those with disabilities.

Regional variations; It is also important to highlight regional disparities. School attendance varies by region. Among the nine regions, Northern Uganda has the lowest proportion of primary school age children attending school (74%). Karamoja which is classified as a sub population of the North has a Net Attendance Ratio (NAR) of only 43%. In urban areas, 35% of secondary school age children are attending school, compared with 13% of those in rural areas. The secondary school net attendance ratios (NAR) ranges from 44% in Kampala, 12% in Eastern, 8% in Western, 11% in West Nile, 13% in South West to 5% in the North. Within the North, the sub populations in the IDP camps and Karamoja have especially low NARs of 3% and 1 %respectively. The situation in IDPs has been included to underscore the fact that displacement aggravates the vulnerability of children and further undermines the opportunities for them to access education.

The case of children with disabilities; There are estimated 800,000 – 1,200,000 children with disabilities in Uganda (UBOS, 2002). Many of these children have limited access to education, health and rehabilitation services and information. They also suffer stigma and discrimination within and outside the family setting. It has long been argued that children with disabilities in education and health will be prioritized after the challenges affecting children in general have been sorted out. Whilst this may not be explicit government policy, the implementation plans, programs and actions seem to vindicate this unfortunate view. Children with disabilities in education remain a neglected category that cannot wait any longer. One key lesson learnt from engaging in UPE is that its introduction and implementation threw light on the dire needs that plagues our primary education system; number of teachers, teaching quality, physical infrastructure shortages, etcetera and this enabled help and action to be focused on these areas. The same can be done for children with disabilities in all sectors; health, education, infrastructure, water and sanitation etcetera. We need to engage with it to shine light on where help is needed – and help will come!

Less emphasis on Early Childhood Education (ECE); Currently, less than 14% of children enroll in any form of pre-primary education (UBOS, 2004). Only 23% of children in rural areas access pre-primary education compared to 63% of their urban counterparts. This is largely attributed to the dominance of the private sector which virtually manages all the 9000 pre-primary schools in the country (MoES 2003, 2007). As a result there is high under-age enrolment in primary 1 (accounting for over 20%) which partly explains the low completion rates of 30%.

Recommendations

- Government should commit more resources to the sector including the neglected

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- sub sectors of pre-primary, BTVET and Non-Formal Education.
- Invest in teacher training and appropriate staffing levels including consideration for special needs education and female teachers.
 - Improve the learning environment including providing enough classrooms and instructional materials for all children.
 - Provide school feeding especially for resource limited communities.
 - Strengthen inspection of educational institutions to ensure quality. Government needs to provide adequate funding to Education Standards Agency¹⁴ (ESA) and the District Education Inspectorates.
 - Government should adopt incentive based schemes for promoting enrollment. This includes tagging income transfers to individuals/families on enrolling children in school and allocating grants to districts based on redetection data.

2.1.5. Health

Progress and Challenges

Abolition of user fees in public health units with the exception of private wings in hospitals has led to a dramatic increase in utilization of public health facilities, especially by the poorest people. Whereas the physical access to health facilities has improved, drugs supplies and personnel remain a challenge but a priority for the Government (UCRNN, 2007). In spite of the heavy allocation of resources to the Ministry of Health, Infant Mortality Rates remain high at 76/1000 live births in 2006, Under 5 Mortality at 137/1000 live births, with both showing a very minimal reduction over a five-year period (UDHS, 2006). According to UBOS 2006, Maternal Mortality rates remain high at 435/100,000 mothers. Uganda therefore has a big challenge in realizing the MDG target of 131/100,000 mothers by 2015. Malaria remains a major child-killer as does acute respiratory infections, malnutrition and maternal conditions.

Resource allocation is also swayed towards the centre. For instance Ministry of Health was allocated 47% of the Sectoral budget while local level spending where majority of the people live was only 40% (UDN, 2006).

There is low funding for key child health priorities including immunization programmes, combating malnutrition, improving primary health care, adequate staffing at all levels, early childhood development, maternal health, sanitation and domestic hygiene, deworming and Vitamin A supplementation, availability of drugs and combating pediatric HIV/AIDS.

Recommendations

- While all forms of health interventions are important for the survival of children, greater investment in immunization programmes, combating malnutrition, improving primary health care, adequate staffing at all levels, early childhood development, maternal health, availability of drugs, combating HIV/AIDS and malaria would go a long way to enhance the child's right to adequate health care. The Government needs to invest more in these areas.

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- Develop HIV/AIDS pediatrics content to support over 40,000 children in need of ARVs.
- Strengthen home based care particularly for children orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS.
- Staffing including facilitation of staff in hard to reach areas- areas with insecurity, islands as well as rural areas which lack the appropriate social amenities is necessary in attracting and retaining trained personnel for effective service delivery.
- Leverage more resources for local Governments as they are at the centre of health care service delivery.

2.2. To enhance the quality and availability of gainful employment

To meet the above objective, the Government is planning to focus on relevant human skills and educational curriculum, knowledge economy, upgrading Information and Communication Technology (ICT), reducing unemployment and underemployment and addressing several population issues (MoFPED, 2007). As the Government focuses on these issues, UCRNN approaches this national objective from a child rights and child well-being perspective: Gainful employment should 'do no harm' to children, but rather be an opportunity to 'prepare them to take responsibility for their own lives' (WFFC, III A 32:1).

UCRNN draws Government attention to two key areas of focus:

(i) Gainful employment of women

(ii) Children in employment

2.2.1. Gainful employment of women and link with ECD

MGLSD in its SDIP (2003 – 2008) identified as a target the 'promotion of employment and productivity'. Its priorities were to establish 3 labour policies, extend labour and employment services, increase workplace inspections for safety and health, extend the labour administration functions and have a functional productivity centre. Whilst these are structurally useful from a macro perspective, UCRNN believes that MGLSD should focus on promotion of productivity at a level that will impact the household directly and reach the children within it. Hence the proposal to focus on the gainful employment of women.

It is a well-established fact that when a woman in a household earns an income, the household's well-being is improved (World Bank, 2004). Unfortunately many poor households have their mothers/female caregivers tied up in the roles of **care-giving** especially for the children. In spite of the availability of UPE, care for younger siblings has also contributed to girls in many poor families dropping out of school.

UCRNN believes that for the state to improve household standards of living, it should invest in freeing up women's time spent in provision of child care so that they can engage in economically productive roles without harming the well-being of their children. A study by Cornell University¹⁵ found that 'although the extra money women earn apparently raises

¹²
¹⁵ <http://www.news.cornell.edu/releases/Sept97/women.africa.ssl.html>

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household food consumption more than extra earnings from men do, the diminished quantity or quality of child care may have serious adverse consequences for the health of preschool age children?. Making quality gainful employment available per se would not be enough for women with child caring roles to engage in it. Women need to be given quality child-care options that would give them the confidence to comfortably engage in gainful employment. Models of early childhood care that complements care giving and income generation have been piloted and could be adopted and scaled up.

Early Childhood Development (ECD)

The link between the prioritizing early childhood development and economic and national development has been made. Early childhood is the most cost effective period in a child's life to invest. Events in the early years of a child's life influence the child's productivity and learning ability throughout the life's course. It has been proven to be an effective strategy for poverty reduction. Children who do not reach their development potential are less likely to be productive adults. Studies have shown that each year of learning at school increases wages by 9.7%. The loss in income of being stunted but not in poverty is 22%. The loss in income of being in poverty but not stunted is 6%.

Challenges

- Limited coordination of ECD interventions at programming and policy levels; ECD services are scattered and fragmented within several government ministries and departments at central and local government levels without clear mechanisms for coordination. The multi-sectoral nature of ECD makes coordination difficult hence the confusion of roles at national and local levels.
- Lack of a policy framework on ECD; Uganda lacks a national policy/framework on ECD. This makes it difficult to harmonize interventions, assess performance and ensure quality.
- Limited prioritization of ECD in national and district frameworks (plans and budgets); ECD is insufficiently incorporated in key frameworks such as the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), Sectoral Plans and district development plans. In effect, funding for ECD programmes has been limited and piecemeal.
- There is also generally inadequate knowledge on early childhood development issues amongst the general public which means that any interventions are in a way limited by the public knowledge and response.

Opportunities

There are models that have been developed by CSOs that can be replicated and scaled up. The Hope for African Children Initiative (HACI) has created an innovative model that brings together **early childhood care and income generation** for poor and vulnerable households. In this model, the children under 5 are provided with comprehensive early childhood care freeing up their older siblings to go to school and their mothers to engage in group income generation activities and group savings and loans. This is a form of community based social and economic infrastructure that empowers women and has shown improvement in the standards of living of the participating households.

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MoES has developed a sectoral policy on ECD as a guiding framework for responding to early childhood development concerns in the sector. This policy addresses early childhood development concerns for the education sector but is not comprehensive enough to respond to issues of protection, health, nutrition for children aged 0-8. It can be built upon to inform the national policy framework and guide the development of other sector specific policies.

2.2.2. Children in employment

Progress

It is estimated that there are 2.7 million working children in Uganda accounting for 16% of the children (UNHS, 2006). These children are engaged in different kinds of work, mainly in the informal sector. Children work in restaurants and bars as waiters and waitresses, cooks and cleaners. They wash cars, porter goods, clean offices, work in kiosks or markets, hawk on the streets. They farm, look after livestock, pick tea, harvest coffee. Children work in mines and quarries, make bricks, dig sand and clay and some children, especially girls, are engaged in domestic labour and sex-work. Some of this work is hazardous and some of it exploitative and is often damaging to health, safety and development of children.

UCRNN commends the Government for ratifying the ILO Convention No. 138 and 182 on minimum age of employment and elimination of the worst forms of child labour respectively. As a result there are a number of initiatives that are being implemented with the support of ILO/IPEC to address the problem of child labour. MGLSD working in close collaboration with ILO/IPEC and key CSO actors concerned about child labour developed a National Child Labour Policy that was launched on the Day of the African Child in 2007. An initiative to make a popular version of the policy is underway. In addition, the Government passed four labour laws in 2006 and these provide protection and mechanisms for addressing child labour¹⁴.

Challenges

- Shortage of labour inspectors; The African Peer Review Mechanism Report (APRM, 2007) noted that only 30 of the 81 districts have labour officers complicating response to labour concerns including child labour issues at district level.
- Many children are not registered at birth; According to UDHS 2000/2001, only 4% of the children were registered at birth in the previous five years. This undermines proper verification of children being commercially exploited and preventing entry of children into the world of employment.
- Persistent poverty; Almost by definition the poorest children have the least power and the least ability to resist child labour.
- Limited awareness on existing laws and policies on child labour occasioned by poor dissemination mechanisms and chronic underfunding.

Recommendations

¹⁴These are the Labour Unions Act; Employment Act; Labour Dispute and Settlement Act and the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

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- Consider as a government priority, engaging in and supporting early childhood care for vulnerable households as it¹⁷
 - Promotes the wellbeing and potential of children to live in a competitive and demanding world that requires innovation and multi-tasking
 - frees up women's labour to engage in gainful employment
- With the fundamental objective of improving the wellbeing of their children, support women voluntary village savings and loans schemes alongside group income generation activities and the provision of early childhood care.¹⁸ Also of critical importance is guaranteeing access to market for women's produce.
- Target government social services and infrastructure for children to the poor so that the little money they spend seeking these services can be saved and reinvested to improve the standard of living of the children and therefore of the household as a whole.
- Develop a national comprehensive policy framework on ECD.
- Allocate resources to areas critical for the survival and development of children aged 0-8 years.
- Roll out the Child Labour Policy through allocation of adequate financial and human resources to the MGLSD.
- Scale up efforts to have all children registered at birth.

¹⁷ Models of community-based and centre-based ECD can be obtained for Hope for African Children Initiative (HACI/CARE) and Action for Children (AFC) among others.

¹⁸ Reference: HACI Programme in Gulu

3. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

3.1 Coordination

The role of MGLSD

The mandate for the protection of children largely falls under MGLSD. The ministry has put in place a number of policy and legislative measures to ensure realization of the child's right to protection in line with national and international instruments. To fulfill its mandate, the ministry requires ample resources to among other things ensure that:

- Communities are adequately sensitized and mobilized regarding the rights of children.
- Policies and legislation are implemented.
- Facilities for children in institutional care promote rather than violate the rights of children.
- Family structures are strengthened and facilitated to play their caring role.
- Children who are displaced or are on the street or in institutions are reintegrated with their families.
- Sufficient technical staff is available to ensure delivery of quality services
- There are sufficient measures to ensure the protection of the particularly vulnerable children.
- Adequate oversight work is done by MGLSD over local authorities and NGOs.

Challenges

Limited resource allocation; It should be noted that the allocation of funds in the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) is based on sectors. The SDIP which has been developed under the auspices of the MGLSD promotes issues of social protection, gender, equality, equity, human rights, culture, decent work conditions and empowerment for different groups such as women, children, the unemployed youth, internally displaced persons, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. These groups are often marginalized or excluded from the benefits of development, and are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and income shocks. Although the ministry has produced the SDIP, it is not "recognized" as a discrete sector in budget allocation. Instead it is lumped under Economic Functions and Social Services (EF and SS). In order to have some understanding of what resources go to support the various child protection related functions in MGLSD, details of what constitutes EF and SS are shown in the table below.

Table 3: Economic Functions and Social Services FY 2006/7 and 2007/08 (billion Shs)

| Sector vote | Total incl. donor funds | Total Incl. donor funds |
|---------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| | FY 2006/07 | FY 2007/08 |
| Energy and minerals | 242.52 | 329.94 |

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| Sector vote | Total incl. donor funds | Total Incl. donor funds |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Tourism trade and Industry | 37.46 | 32.80 |
| Uganda Industrial research Institute | 3.03 | 4.03 |
| Lands, housing and urban development | 17.11 | 9.61 |
| Uganda national bureau of standards | 3.83 | 4.83 |
| Uganda Land Commission | 0.96 | 1.17 |
| Gender Labour and Social development | 12.00 | 20.17 |
| Office of the Prime Minister (development) | 93.59 | 80.33 |
| Energy fund | 99.40 | 119.40 |
| Local government development (excluding roads) | 76.29 | 51.73 |
| Information communication technology | 1.19 | 6.50 |
| sub-county development grant /strategic interventions | 5.58 | 16.00 |
| District grants | 79.50 | 80.52 |
| o/w District functional adult literacy (o/w | 1.60 | 1.69 |
| o/w District equalization grant | 3.49 | 3.49 |
| o/w Local government development programme | 64.31 | 64.31 |
| o/w non sectoral conditional grant | 8.20 | 7.85 |
| o/w District women Youth and disability councils | 1.36 | 1.50 |
| District natural resource conditional grant | 0.54 | 0.86 |
| o/w community based rehabilitation/public libraries | | 0.82 |
| Total economic functions and social services | 751.96 | 757.01 |

Source: MoFPED, 2006 and 2007

As can be seen from the table, MGLSD was allocated 12 billion shs in the FY 2006/7 and shs 20.17 billion in FY 2007/8. Though there are other funds for other ministry functions like adult literacy, district women youth and disability councils, community based rehabilitation/public libraries that are not channeled through the ministry, it remains loaded with a lot of functions but grossly under-funded-**started as a ministry for vulnerable**

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people but became a vulnerable ministry.

Children are not prioritized in the ministry budget; In the FY 2007/08, the ministry ceiling was increased to Shs 20.17bn from shs 12.00bn excluding taxes in FY 2006/07. This is an increase of shs 8.17 bn which in nominal terms constitutes 68% increase. The priorities of the ministry were; expanding and deepening of functional adult literacy to cover all sub-counties in the country; consolidating the revitalization of community development function; promoting social protection in particular cash transfers; expanding availability and quality of services for OVCs and HIV prevention services for the youth; promoting equal opportunities to ensure equal access to goods and services and non-discrimination to all marginalized groups; increasing labour productivity in both formal and informal sectors; scaling up gender and equity budgeting and; enhancing support to externalization of labour effort and migrant workers abroad.

According to the list of priorities stated above, the ministry has not prioritized activities related to implementing the Children Act and other international obligations, as well as strengthening duty bearer role and response to the violation of children's rights. In addition, looking closely at the budgetary allocation, even though there was an increase of shs 8,170,000,000 for FY2007/08 it was strictly ear marked for the following activities.

Table 4: Additional budget allocation (MGLSD)

| | |
|--|--------|
| Mortgage for buying a house for office accommodation | 4bn |
| Afro – Arab conference youth | 2bn |
| Purchase of house for the queen mother of Toro | 0.5bn |
| Removal of street children | 0.31bn |
| Utilities | 0.02bn |
| Salaries | 0.14bn |
| Donour contribution for UNICEF and UNFPA country programme | 1.34bn |

Source: UCRNN, 2007

Other than the funds earmarked for UNICEF and UNFPA supported activities and removal of children from the streets, the rest of the budget allocation is unlikely to impact on the situation of the millions of vulnerable children in this country. Interestingly, some of the activities that have some direct relevance to OVCs such as celebration of international and national days (which serve as advocacy forums), statutory inspections, feeding of children and people with disabilities in institutions, operations of the 9 departments, removal of street children, operations of the semi autonomous institutions such as the NCC, Equal

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Opportunities Commission and technical support and mentoring of districts (quality assurance) are either under funded or not funded at all.

Structural issues; The MGLSD also suffers from poor staff capacity and has not made a clear paradigm shift from a target group orientation (e.g. orphans, children, youth, etc) to a functional approach (e.g. child protection, community mobilization).¹⁹ Currently the MGLSD retains an organizational structure that combines target group and functional departments. A clear functional orientation would create a more systematic approach to child protection and would make roles and responsibilities easier to define, which would in turn facilitate coordination.

Lack of clarity over leadership; The MGLSD runs many programmes that include the protection of children from violence, exploitation and abuse as one dimension but no department actually has clear leadership responsibility. Programming is duplicative and piece-meal and the issues of violence, exploitation and abuse do not get the kind of systematic or holistic attention they require. In this kind of environment, there is even a risk that efforts to improve coordination are duplicative. For example, both the National Psychosocial Core Team and the National OVC Steering Committee discuss issues concerning child protection but generally without reference to each other.²⁰

Overlapping mandates; There is also considerable overlap of roles of NCC and the MGLSD. Whereas the NCC is the statutory coordinating body on children matters, the MGLSD has a Department for Youth and Children which more or less performs the same functions.

Recommendations

- While recognizing that child protection is multi-sectoral, there is need for stronger leadership at the national level and this is largely the responsibility of the MGLSD. To discharge the leadership effectively, the MGLSD needs to arrive at a clearer internal definition of roles and responsibilities which are explicit as to which section has the role of ensuring coordination on child protection. The MGLSD also needs stronger capacity to provide technical guidance, to set standards and to monitor performance.
- Another necessary element is increasing funding to the MGLSD, the institutions responsible for implementation of the Children Act, and protection activities at district level.
- The SDS led by the MGLSD needs to make explicit provision for child protection as an area for priority funding under Poverty Action Fund (PAF).

¹⁹ MGLSD, Ibid pp.8-10

²⁰ UNICEF October 2005, Report on the Situation of Children and Women in the Republic of Uganda, p.138

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- The Department for Youth and Children's Affairs should be relocated to the President's Office. This will give it the necessary clout and funding to serve more than half of this country's population.

The National Council for children (NCC)

NCC is the statutory body mandated to coordinate all activities and services targeting children. NCC has limited capacity to take on its responsibility. The proposed restructuring process with the intention of replacing it with Uganda National Children Authority (UNCA) has not taken effect, a scenario that may hamper implementation of children's rights in a coordinated manner.

Challenges

The effectiveness of NCC has been hampered by a number of factors, namely:

- The NCC's policy body consists of members drawn from 10 ministries, 4 representatives of indigenous NGOs, 3 special members as well as 5 persons of proven integrity and knowledgeable in children's welfare. The NCC statute further specifies that the persons (civil servants) to be members of the council should not be below the rank of Under Secretary. However, their involvement in the Council is only part time and since most of them are employed as civil servants, it is always difficult to raise quorum for council meetings.
- Most of the members of the NCC are not in a position where they can influence policy in the sectors in which they are based.

Recommendations

- Government should expedite the process of restructuring NCC in order to ensure full discharge of its duties.
- UCRNN further recommends that the Government provide NCC and, as soon as it is established, UNCA with adequate human and financial resources to execute its mandate, including the effective coordination of the activities at the national and district levels

The district local governments

At the district level, statutory child protection activities are led by the District Probation and Social Welfare Officers (PSWOs) while community based activities are more within the remit of the District Community Development Officers (CDOs) and Assistants. The latter are also responsible for a wide range of other community development issues and so they are generally over-stretched and unable to focus effectively on child protection. Districts do not receive conditional grants from the MoFPED to cover child protection. As a result, child protection is rarely made a priority issue within district plans of operation and there is very limited deployment of human and financial resources in programmes and projects at the district and sub county levels. For example, resource constraints negatively impact the implementation of the Children Act and the NSPPI. There is a general lack of logistical capacity within districts to monitor and guide protection programmes in the field.

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Recommendations

- Provide adequate resources and logistical support to the CBS Directorates including support to recruitment of staff to at least 80% of the vacancies.

3.2 Mainstreaming child protection

National development planning and systems tend to be categorized according to sectors. Children, like other groups of society cut across all sectors. In ensuring that they are adequately catered for and considered in national development plans, means that all sectors need to factor in the needs and rights of children. This requires key actors, policy and decision makers to consciously put on a children's lens when developing their sectoral plans and for this case, working papers. Unfortunately, with the exception of the education and health sectors that have an inescapable link with children, other sectors do not take serious consideration of how their priorities, plans and budgets affect the well-being of children.

UCRNN notes that on the whole, Government allocates a lot of resources to sectors aimed at benefiting children – the health and education sector. As stated in the WWFC report “there is need to match these allocations with the magnitude of the problem being addressed and the specific areas of interventions to yield better results for children” (GoU, WWFC NPR, Pg 5, 2005). Better results for children can be got when sectors, ministries, agencies and departments coordinate. Among children, one form of vulnerability usually attracts another and therefore the need for all key actors and stakeholders to plan, implement and monitor together. The place and space for this is in the SDS (MGLSD) and the NCC.

The MGLSD once started the initiative of providing ministries with guidance on how to incorporate children's concerns but it is not clear what results this yielded. The same applies to the outputs identified in the SDIP regarding the mainstreaming of social development concerns. Outputs identified under this target were noble: social development mainstreaming strategy, building capacities for mainstreaming SD; reviewing policies and plans for Social Development responsiveness etcetera. However, their impact remains to be seen. The recognition of the role Social Development plays in the apparent conceptual shift from poverty eradication to national development should be paramount and resources made available to support this role.

Recommendations

- UCRNN strongly recommends that the Government should continue to strengthen the capacity of ministries responsible for fulfilling the rights and meeting the needs of vulnerable children. This includes increasing budget ceilings to enable the recruitment and retention of appropriately skilled staff. Resources for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, strategies and plans for vulnerable children should be adequately provided and more importantly, that the national annual budgets make provisions **from domestic sources** for a sustainable response to the needs of vulnerable children.
- UCRNN associates itself with the recommendation of the CSO Position Paper on

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Social Protection that 'Each Ministry to set aside a certain minimum percentage (for example 2%) of their annual budget to finance Social Protection programs in their sectors'²¹. The MGLSD should continue to provide technical guidance to the various Ministries on how to identify, plan for and implement social development initiatives that are relevant to their sectors particularly through the mainstreaming strategy.

- The effective incorporation of children with disabilities and other marginalized children in the health, education and other sectors would benefit substantially from an operational Equal Opportunities Policy and the attendant Commission.

²¹ The actual amount to be set aside would vary from one sector to another depending on the depth and complexity of the programs which are being mainstreamed (for example school feeding may take a larger proportion of the budget if this is what is decided for the education sector).

4. SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT 5 YEARS

1. Over the next 5 years, Government needs to consolidate, coordinate and scale up good practices in reaching orphan and other vulnerable children through a nation-wide programme that includes all categories of vulnerable children.

Strategy

MGLSD in partnership with CORE Initiative and with support from USAID are spear-heading a proposal to initiate a basket fund for OVC. Government should support and use this initiative to have a wider and better reach for all children in difficult circumstances. To this end, Government should work to incorporate other categories of vulnerable children into the consolidated OVC programme.

2. Government (MGLSD, MOH, MOES and UAC) should priorities availing ECD services for poor families in a bid to better the lives of the children, increase household standards of living and free women to engage in gainful employment.

Strategy

Establish a comprehensive policy framework on ECD. Such a policy should prioritize income generation and micro finance especially for community/rural-based initiatives. Consider a policy to have an ECD centre at every primary school so that girl children are freed up to participate in primary school and mothers to engage in gainful employment.

3. Government should continue prioritizing mainstreaming social development concerns and strengthening inter-sectoral coordination. The focus in the next five years should be on implementing the mainstreaming strategy, especially in the areas of education and health that receive sizable budgets and whose impact may be affected by factors the social development sector can address.

Strategy

Implement the mainstreaming Strategy developed. The MGLSD should in its strategy provide a framework for analyzing the impact of ministries/sectoral policies and programs have on children. Ensure that each ministry allocates a percentage of its budget to social protection issues, specifically noting those that affect children.

4. Government priority for children in the conflict-affected region of the north should remain a priority.

Strategy

The recently launched PRDP should act as a springboard for furthering support to the children affected by conflict, providing an operational framework within which CSOs and other agencies provide for these children.

5. A functioning M&E/MIS data-base needs to be supported and adequately linked with that

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of other ministries. This is essential if MGLSD is to make a strong case for additional resources using sound data. The target numbers of children returned and resettled should be established and indicators on quality of services and implementation established.

Strategy

Complete the process that has begun with the setting up of the systems and identification of core indicators to be monitored at both national and programme level.

5. CONCLUSION

No better conclusion can be made than UNICEF's findings that 'Five principles of good social policy can be derived from the experience of countries that have reduced poverty in a rapid and sustainable manner.

1. First, these countries integrate and simultaneously address economic and social rights; they do not give priority to achieving macro economic stability or economic growth first while keeping social development in abeyance.
2. Second, they spend more on basic social services and child protection.
3. Third, they allocate funds better in terms of integration, equity and efficiency.
4. Fourth, during periods of austerity and adjustment, they maintain the level of financial support for basic social services and the protection of children's rights.
5. Finally, they promote community participation in managing the delivery of an integrated package of social services and in the special protection of vulnerable children.

UCRNN believes the Government of Uganda is ready to learn from this experience.

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