

EFFECTIVENESS OF DIRECT INCOME SUPPORT ON POVERTY REDUCTION AMONG THE ELDERLY IN UGANDA.

Author: Viola Nampeera

Email: namviola@yahoo.com

Tel: + 256 712 729382

Affiliation: Malaria Consortium and HIPO-Africa

Co-Authors: Vivienne Najjemba (SAGE Project)

Background

Older populations (i.e. those who are aged 60 years and above) in developing countries are growing both in numbers and proportions. Of the approximately 600 million older persons in the world today, 370 million of them live in developing countries. By 2020, 70% of the world's one billion older persons will live in developing countries. Over the next five decades, the number of persons aged 60+ in the developing countries will be nine times greater than it is today, and the share of elderly persons residing in urban areas will be 16 times greater. It is a clear picture: cities in developing countries will have more and more older persons in the future.

In Uganda alone, the proportion of the elderly persons has risen from 4.5% of Uganda's population of 26 million (2006) which yields an estimated total of 1,101,039 million older people, to 4.6% (1,400,000 in 2010). Elder persons are among the more vulnerable groups of the chronically poor, others being children (particularly orphans), people with physical and mental impairment, widows and widowers and the landless. Even among the elderly, there are some categories that are relatively more vulnerable to chronic poverty.

Local people may face barriers of language, ethnicity, gender, class, poverty, access to information, or simply lack the confidence to speak out. They face the visible formal and informal structures of power, such as village or neighbourhood committees, service user groups, tribal councils, dominant families or castes, and formal structures of local government. They also face power dynamics such as business interests or patronage relationships based on debt and obligation.

It is therefore to this effect that we seek to establish the extent to which social protection is capable of reducing risk and vulnerability among the elderly in rural Uganda.

Research Questions

1. How effectively has social protection reduced vulnerability among the chronically poor in rural Uganda?
2. Is there a way in which the current social protection strategies can be improved for better service delivery?

Relevant Literature

The Government of Kenya has been implementing various Direct Income support programmes for a number of years. In the budget speech 2011/2012, the Kenya Minister of Finance announced significant increases in financing for Direct Income support programmes to vulnerable groups including doubling the budget for the senior citizens' and Disability grant.

In Zambia, the programme has had a significant impact on health and nutrition. The percentage of households having one meal per day fell from 23% to 13% and reported feelings of still being hungry after a fell by 24%. Food quality also appeared to have improved with the intake of fats, proteins and vitamins increasing. The number of people becoming ill fell by 13% and reported illnesses in the month before the survey decreased by almost 8% among those people sampled. Studies have also found that the programme has had a positive effect on education. Among those households surveyed, school enrolment rates increased and there was a reduction of 15% in absenteeism. The impact on youth enrolment was most striking with 50% of all youth who were not in school at the time of the programme's baseline assessment being enrolled at the time of the evaluation.

In Ethiopia, the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), 29% of the cash was used for health costs and 15% for education expenses in one survey. Almost 50% of beneficiaries reported using health facilities more in the year of the programme was introduced than in the previous year and of those households spending money on education, 53% reported that they had kept more children in school as a direct result of the programme.

In South Africa, having a recipient of Direct Income Support in a household is directly associated with three-to-four-centimetre increase in height among children. Studies of Mexico's Oportunidades Programme also find that children in beneficiary households gained one centimetre in height-for-age, compared to a control group. Such findings suggest there will be positive effects on these children's employment and productivity in the medium and longer-term.

Methodology

The study combined several research methods that included secondary data from various reports, and policy documents dotted around in different agencies, which have tried to address the aspect of Social protection in Uganda.

Results and Discussions

The Social protection package has contributed to Increasing dignity, empowerment, self-esteem, confidence & participation of the elderly in community affairs. Global experience also shows that such Senior Citizens Grants are often the starting point for national social protection systems that cover several categories of the vulnerable

Social protection in Uganda is “exceptionally important”, not only from a moral and ethical perspective, but also because it makes sound sense to foster national economic growth and well-being, to accelerate poverty reduction, and to ensure social stability.

Social protection has also worked a great deal in institutionalizing systems that guarantee assistance for the very poor and protect the vulnerable from livelihood risks and social discrimination. Many initiatives are no longer isolated pilot projects and have started to reach hundreds of thousands of very poor people. There is therefore a growing body of experience to learn from.

Senior citizens grants are not just for senior citizens but benefit all the family...

- Health and Education
- Child nutrition
- Micro investments for the family
- Local business and economic growth

Older persons have made immense contributions to building and developing the country since independence

- Paying tax
- Liberation struggles
- Working and supporting the economy
- Caring for their children and grand children
- Caring for Orphans due to HIV/AIDS
- Grandmothers care for grandchildren and enables working age parents to produce food for their families or enter the labour market.

For this reason therefore, they should be rewarded immensely for their tremendous contribution, so that they can also have sufficient welfare in their old age

Conclusion

Therefore, it is to a great extent that Social Protection is capable and at the same time likely to reduce risk and vulnerability among the elderly in rural Uganda.

