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Research supporting social  
services to adapt to shocks

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# Towards shock-responsive social protection: lessons from the COVID-19 response in Uganda

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Research report

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March 2021



## About Maintains

This five-year (2018–2023) operational research programme is building a strong evidence base on how health, education, nutrition, and social protection systems can respond more quickly, reliably, and effectively to changing needs during and after shocks, whilst also maintaining existing services. Maintains is working in six focal countries—Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Kenya, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, and Uganda—undertaking research to build evidence and providing technical assistance to support practical implementation. Lessons from this work will be used to inform policy and practice at both national and global levels.

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## List of abbreviations

CDO	Community Development Officer
CPMC	Community Project Management Committee
DRDIP	Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project
FCDO	UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDP	Gross domestic product
GoU	Government of Uganda
IGC	International Growth Centre
ILO	International Labour Organization
KCCA	Kampala Capital City Authority
LIPW	Labour-intensive public works programme
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
Maintains	Maintaining Essential Services After Natural Disasters
MGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
MIS	Management information system
MoFPED	Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development
NDVI	Normalised Difference Vegetation Index
NECOC	National Emergency Coordination and Operations Centre
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NSPP	National Social Protection Policy
NSSF	National Social Security Fund
OPM	Oxford Policy Management
PWD	People with disabilities
SCG	Senior Citizens' Grant
SOPs	Standard operating procedures
SPACE	Social Protection Approaches to COVID-19 – Expert Advice Helpline
UCWP	Urban Cash for Work Programme

UGX	Ugandan Shillings
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of this study

In response to COVID-19, around 200 countries/territories have adapted their social protection systems in order to support households and mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic. The ways in which social protection systems have been adapted have differed widely and have included both the development of new social protection programmes and the expansion and adaptation of existing programmes (Gentilini *et al.*, 2020).

All of the countries in which Maintains is active (Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Kenya, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, and Uganda) have announced adaptations of their social protection system, albeit with varying degrees of comprehensiveness. Given the many reforms and initiatives currently being implemented as part of the COVID-19 response, the current crisis presents a unique opportunity to learn across different countries, and to better understand how exactly social protection is used to respond to shocks – and what implications this has for investments in shock-responsive social protection systems going forward.

This study aims to:

- document the social protection responses in all six Maintains countries and, in particular, the use of social protection delivery mechanisms<sup>1</sup> and information systems;<sup>2</sup>
- assess these responses in terms of adequacy, coverage, and comprehensiveness;<sup>3</sup> and
- draw out lessons for future responses and investments in shock-responsive social protection systems.

This report presents the findings from the Uganda case study and is part of a series of case studies across the six Maintains countries. The findings from this report will also be used to feed into a cross-country synthesis report.

## 1.2 Overview of the social protection landscape in Uganda

The right to social protection for all Ugandan citizens is set out in the 1995 Constitution. The Government of Uganda (GoU) has articulated an ambitious vision for the social protection sector, reflecting this right, with commitments to expand the coverage of social assistance to 50% of the vulnerable population by 2030, as set out in the third National Development Plan.<sup>4</sup>

The approval of Uganda's first National Social Protection Policy (NSPP) (MGLSD, 2015) in 2015 marked a critical juncture in the path towards establishing a social protection system in Uganda. The NSPP maps out a unified policy framework for establishing a comprehensive and coordinated social protection system covering social insurance and social assistance,

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<sup>1</sup> The mechanisms in place for delivering cash or in-kind assistance to social protection beneficiaries and/or people affected by shocks (e.g. targeting mechanisms, payment mechanisms, etc.).

<sup>2</sup> Socioeconomic, disaster risk, and vulnerability information to enable decision-making before and after a shock, including social registries and beneficiary registries, disaster risk management information systems, etc.

<sup>3</sup> For definitions of key concepts see O'Brien *et al.* (2018).

<sup>4</sup> Available at: [www.health.go.ug/cause/third-national-development-plan-ndp-iii-2020-21-2024-25/](http://www.health.go.ug/cause/third-national-development-plan-ndp-iii-2020-21-2024-25/)



while the Programme Plan of Interventions (2015/16 – 2019/20) outlines strategies to operationalise the NSPP. Further, given Uganda’s vulnerability to covariate shocks, most commonly climatic shocks, the long-term (to 2040) vision for social assistance articulated in the NSPP is that direct income support programmes should support Ugandans to be resilient to socioeconomic risks and shocks. However, the social protection system (including in relation to shock response) is still relatively nascent.

The primary institutions involved in overseeing the design and delivery of social protection in Uganda are the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) and the Office of the Prime Minister. Development partners have also played an important role in the development of the social protection sector. The MGLSD acts as the coordinating ministry for social protection, with the mandate for the delivery of social protection involving national ministries and local authorities. The Office of the Prime Minister has both an oversight and coordination function, as well as responsibility for implementing the labour-intensive public works programmes (LIPWs).

Social protection in Uganda is currently structured along two main pillars, according to the NSPP: social security (including non-contributory programmes (social assistance) and contributory programmes); and social care and support services. Following our conceptual framework (see Section 2.1), this report focuses on the first pillar, and specifically on non-contributory direct income support programmes. Further, little progress has been made on conceptualising and developing clear mechanisms for coordination under the social care and support services pillar since the NSPP was established, although departments and units within MGLSD are running a number of social care programmes (MGLSD, 2019).

Uganda’s flagship social assistance programmes include the Senior Citizens’ Grant (SCG), the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF3) and the Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (DRDIP), and there are also a number of smaller direct income support programmes. The following paragraphs provide an overview of the major initiatives (though not covering the extent to which they responded to COVID-19):

- The **SCG**, implemented by the MGLSD, is designed to reduce old-age poverty by providing a minimum level of income security through payments of UGX 25,000 (approximately £5) every three months to all citizens above the age of 80.<sup>5</sup> The programme is funded by the GoU, with support from UK Aid and Irish Aid and reached 169,342 beneficiaries as at early 2020, representing a coverage level of 13% of the programme’s target population.<sup>6</sup> The SCG was initially a pilot programme, but the MGLSD announced on 8 March 2020 that the programme would be rolled-out nationally to achieve universal coverage of all Ugandans aged 80 years and over, thus reaching an additional 200,000 people across all 135 districts of Uganda. While all SCG activities were subsequently paused due to the lockdown in Uganda (see Section 1.3), registration and enrolment activities for the roll-out began in June 2020 (MGLSD, 2020).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The eligibility criteria for the SCG were changed to all citizens above the age of 80 as part of the national roll-out in 2020. Previously, the eligibility criteria were age 60+ in Karamoja and age 65+ in the 15 pilot districts.

<sup>6</sup> This was all citizens aged 60+ in Karamoja and aged 65+ in the 15 pilot districts

<sup>7</sup> According to the 2016 social protection investment case (GoU, 2016), there were 1,113,954 individuals aged over 65 in Uganda in that year. However, due to concerns over financial sustainability and government capacity, the age of eligibility was raised to over 80 years for the national roll-out. The SCG was expected to reach approximately 350,000 individuals over 80 after the roll-out.

- **NUSAF3** (2016–2021) is a cash-for-work/LIPW programme, which focuses on the Northern region. It is led by the Office of the Prime Minister, with financial and technical support from the World Bank. As of December 2020, NUSAF3 had created over 22.5 million person-days of work through LIPWs and built 3,240 community assets in participating districts in Northern Uganda and Karamoja. More than 584,000 households (covering approximately 2.9 million people, of which over 50 percent are female) have benefited from cash transfers, cash-for-work, public works and livelihoods support through the programme. NUSAF3 also has a shock-responsive component: in Karamoja, which suffers recurrent drought episodes (see Box 2), the programme is able to scale up vertically and horizontally on the basis of a climatic trigger.
- **DRDIP** (launched in 2016 in Uganda) is a US\$ 200 million LIPW led by the Office of the Prime Minister, with financial support from the World Bank (US\$ 50 million credit and additional financing of a US\$ 150 million grant from 2020). DRDIP addresses the unmet social, economic, and environmental needs in the 15 refugee-hosting district communities and settlements in Uganda. DRDIP and NUSAF3 are co-hosted and implemented by the same agency in the Office of the Prime Minister, and DRDIP was designed to leverage the capacities, structures, processes, and procedures established under NUSAF3. The Displacement Crisis Response Mechanism has been established under DRDIP: it aims to develop and finance a mechanism to support rapid government scale-up of assistance to host communities that are poor and vulnerable, in response to refugee-related displacement shocks (Mahoney and Maher, 2020).
- The Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) is implementing a cash plus mentoring programme, known as **Girls Empowering Girls**, that reaches 1,500 adolescent girls in Kampala, with support from the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

Overall, coverage of direct income support programmes in Uganda is extremely low by regional and international standards. Social assistance measures covered about 1% of the population in 2018/19, although the expansion of the SCG and the recent launch of DRDIP resulted in slightly higher coverage by the end of 2020. There is wide variation in coverage by region, with the majority of social assistance beneficiaries residing in northern Uganda, as this is the area covered by NUSAF3 (MGLSD, 2019).

Expenditure on social assistance is also low by international standards,<sup>8</sup> with the GoU and development partners spending the equivalent of 0.14% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2018/19 on the SCG and NUSAF3. While figures for 2019/20 are not available, spending will have risen somewhat in 2020, with the roll-out of the SCG and the launch of DRDIP, but figures are likely to remain well below regional levels.<sup>9</sup> In 2019/20, the GoU allocated just 0.6% of the national budget to social development, one of the smallest sectors across the government, which includes social protection among many other issues.<sup>10</sup> Overall, the trajectory of domestic and international expenditure on social assistance is not well aligned

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<sup>8</sup> For example, Rwanda has a similar GDP per capita but spent 1.43% of GDP on social assistance in 2015 (UNDP, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> For example, Beegle *et al.* (2018) reported that African countries spend an average 1.2% of GDP on social safety nets.

<sup>10</sup> Social development includes labour and employment, community participation in development, youth development, rights, gender equality and women’s empowerment, countering discrimination, and social protection.

with what would be necessary to achieve the ambitious coverage targets set out in the third National Development Plan.

In terms of information systems, most social protection programmes in Uganda have a dedicated management information system (MIS) containing data on programme beneficiaries. In Karamoja, the World Food Programme (WFP) supported the GoU to develop the Karamoja Social Registry (containing data on non-beneficiaries in the sub-region), to be used for NUSAF3 drought scale-up. In February 2021, the GoU also launched an integrated beneficiary registry (commonly referred to as the Single Registry in Uganda), which brings together data from the programme MISs in one place. The financing agreement between the GoU and the World Bank for the COVID-19 response (see Section 4.1) provided for the establishment of the Single Registry to enable shock-responsive social protection responses to future shocks.<sup>11</sup>

There are a number of social insurance schemes in operation, although coverage is limited, with only 5% of the working-age population contributing to these programmes (MGLSD, 2019). The Public Service Pensions Scheme is a non-contributory retirement benefit scheme financed directly by tax revenues from the Consolidated Fund and available to civil servants. Uptake of Uganda's largest social security offering, the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), is low, with 1.2 million core members contributing to the fund. Reforms to transition the NSSF from a provident fund to a social insurance scheme have been tabled before Parliament. Further, while a National Health Insurance Scheme bill was approved by Cabinet in 2019, it is still being considered in Parliament, and thus has yet to be implemented (MGLSD, 2019).

### 1.3 COVID-19 in Uganda

Uganda registered its first case of COVID-19 on 21 March 2020. As at 25 February 2021, more than 40,000 cases and 334 deaths had been confirmed.<sup>12</sup> While COVID-19 cases have been confirmed across the country, the majority of cases have been clustered in the capital, Kampala, and in the districts of Amuru and Tororo, which are bordered by South Sudan in the northeast and Sudan in the north, and Kenya in the east, respectively.<sup>13</sup>

Even before Uganda's first registered case, on 18 March 2020, the GoU announced stringent measures to curb the spread of the virus.<sup>14</sup> These measures included closing the country's borders, and imposing strict curfews and restrictions on movement – all public and private vehicles were banned, with only limited exceptions for delivery and goods transport services. All primary and secondary schools, universities, and other institutions of learning were closed for the duration of 2020, with only examination classes (Primary 7, Secondary 4, and Secondary 6) returning in October 2020. Further, religious gatherings across the country were suspended, in addition to the banning of public rallies and large gatherings. The nationwide lockdown and curfew – initially from 7 pm to 6.30 am, and subsequently from 9 pm to 6.30 am – were accompanied by a series of standard operating procedures (SOPs)

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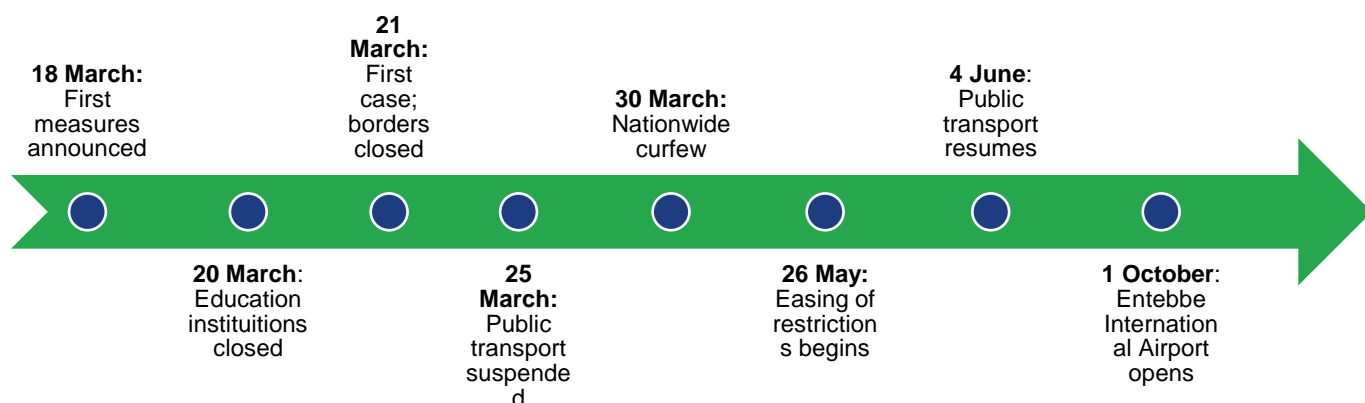
<sup>11</sup> Once in place, the national Single Registry for beneficiaries of safety net programmes is expected to have 1,090,880 registered beneficiaries. See World Bank (2020a).

<sup>12</sup> See <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/region/uganda>

<sup>13</sup> See <https://covid19.gou.go.ug/statistics.html>

<sup>14</sup> See <https://covid19.gou.go.ug/timeline.html> for a timeline of the GoU's COVID-19 response.

to maintain social distancing and hygiene in establishments providing essential services, such as banks, funeral homes, supermarkets, and utility companies. The wearing of facemasks in public became mandatory from May and in June the government began distributing free facemasks in line with a commitment to distribute 35 million masks to Ugandans aged over six years (Ministry of Health, 2020b). All non-essential services and activities remained closed until the partial lifting of lockdown on 26 May 2020, with Entebbe International Airport finally reopening on 1 October 2020.<sup>15</sup>



The GoU's strict containment measures, coupled with the global recession, have had severe impacts on the Ugandan economy and on the livelihoods of vulnerable Ugandans. Uganda's real GDP grew at just 2.9% in the 2020 financial year, less than half the 6.8% growth recorded in the previous year, and this is expected to persist into the 2021 financial year (World Bank, 2020b), threatening the poverty gains of the past decade. The closure of businesses for an extended period during the lockdown has had serious consequences for economic development and livelihoods, especially for informal sector workers. The informal economy employs around 85% of the labour force, outside agriculture, and the impact on the services sector, which contributes nearly 45% of GDP and employs close to 43% of the total labour force – 67% of whom are in urban areas, with more than 80% in Kampala – is projected to be catastrophic (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2020b). Estimates of the impacts on poverty suggest that 4.4 million informal sector workers could fall below the poverty line, or worse, as a result of the restrictions (United Nations Capital Development Fund, 2020).

The International Growth Centre (IGC) has estimated significant negative impacts on poverty and inequality as a result of the pandemic and lockdown (Younger *et al.*, 2020). Using household survey data,<sup>16</sup> the IGC study estimates that the national poverty headcount will

<sup>15</sup> SOPs have been issued to guide the opening of schools and the airport. See Ministry of Education and Sports (2020) and Uganda Civil Aviation Authority (2020), respectively.

<sup>16</sup> The microsimulation uses the 2016/17 Uganda National Household Survey and estimates the impact on poverty of the general reduction in economic activity due to the pandemic and the lockdown. Household welfare is impacted through an income channel. Individuals are assumed to lose a given share of income from employment and self-employment, depending on the industry they work in and on their location. Moreover, households are assumed to lose 20% of their rent income, 30% of their remittance income, and 70% of their gambling income.

increase from 18.9% pre-crisis<sup>17</sup> to 26.8%, with an additional 3.3 million people falling below the national poverty line.<sup>18</sup> Poverty is predicted to increase more sharply in Kampala (a 16.7 percentage points increase) and urban areas (a 12.9 percentage points increase) than in rural areas (a 6.1 percentage points increase). Consistently, the IGC study finds a substantial increase in inequality in Kampala, where many people previously earning incomes in the middle of the income distribution have lost all their income.

The negative impacts of COVID-19 and the corresponding containment measures are also likely to disproportionately affect women and girls (UN Women, 2020). For girls, school closures have meant higher dropout rates and an increase in sexual violence and teenage pregnancy. Local newspapers have reported an increase in domestic violence, child marriage, and teenage pregnancies during lockdown, and the Uganda Police Force recorded more than 3,000 cases of domestic violence, and six deaths, during the first month of lockdown (New Vision, 2020a; New Vision, 2020b).

The impacts of COVID-19 on the population have also been compounded by the concurrent impacts of flooding and landslides (in May 2020) and locust invasions (April 2020). Floods in the West Nile sub-region, and in the Northern, and Eastern regions of Uganda, as well as in localities surrounding Lake Victoria, have displaced up to 300,000 people (IFRC, 2020). In addition, swarms of locusts have invaded the Northern and Eastern regions of the country, destroying vegetation and compromising food security and livelihoods for farmers, herders, and rural households. This is the most severe locust invasion the region has faced for 70 years (World Bank, n.d.).

Finally, the impact of COVID-19 in Uganda has hit harder for the more than 1.4 million refugees in the country, who are predominately from neighbouring South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The implementation of measures to reduce the spread of the virus, such as regular handwashing and physical distancing, is more difficult in settlements where refugees live in close proximity to each other, and due to the fact that their housing is also not served by running water. UNICEF has found that movement and social distancing restrictions have put a severe strain on – and in some cases have halted – the delivery of water, sanitation, and critical health services (Muzungu, 2020), while food rations supplied by WFP and support have also been reduced due to insufficient funding (Save the children, 2020).

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<sup>17</sup> The official headcount poverty rate in Uganda was 21.4 % in 2016. The figure reported here corresponds to the simulated poverty level before the crisis in 2020.

<sup>18</sup> Research by the World Bank (2020a) provides similar estimates, indicating that the impact of COVID-19 and associated mitigation measures could increase the poverty incidence by 2.7 to 8.2 percentage points, resulting in 1.1 to 3.2 million additional poor people relative to the latest official estimate of 8.7 million in 2016/17.

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Conceptual framework

To assess the different aspects of the social protection system in each of the Maintains countries, and how this was adapted in the COVID-19 response, we developed a [conceptual framework](#) (Beazley *et al.*, 2020). Our framework focuses the analysis of shock-responsive social protection on three dimensions:

- **Response type:** This focuses on three broad options for response: i) undertaking measures to ensure system resilience; ii) adapting programmes through vertical and/or horizontal expansion, and/or launching temporary new programmes; and iii) humanitarian assistance that piggybacks on or aligns with the social protection system.
- **Policies and operational procedures:** This examines how the response is operationalised, including how the policies, systems, and operational procedures used along the delivery chain are developed and/or adjusted for the implementation of the responses.
- **Outcomes:** This provides an assessment of the outcomes of each social protection response in terms of adequacy, coverage, comprehensiveness, timeliness, and long-term implications.

Although social insurance, labour market or employment policies, and social assistance programmes are covered by this framework, our focus is on the latter, which includes both in-kind and cash transfers, and where the response interacts in some way with the social protection system.<sup>19</sup>

Using this framework, we developed a detailed set of research questions that were used to guide the research in each of the Maintains countries, and to ensure that data collection across countries was consistent. The conceptual framework and detailed research questions provide a comprehensive framework to guide the assessment and, in each country, we have focused on answering the most salient questions based on the country's existing social protection system, the way in which responses are implemented, and the data available for this assessment.

### 2.2 Data collection and analysis

The initial stage of data collection for the study in Uganda comprised a mapping of the social protection sector in general, and the social protection responses to COVID-19 specifically. The literature review focused on key documents relating to shock-responsive social protection, as well as a more thorough investigation of relevant laws, reports, and policy documents related to the social protection response in the country. In order to gather more in-depth information, we also conducted a series of key informant interviews with relevant government officials, development partners, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), humanitarian actors, and other stakeholders at the national level involved in the COVID-19

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<sup>19</sup> Social assistance responses that are entirely implemented in parallel to the government's social protection systems are beyond the scope of this study.

response. A full list of the organisations consulted is provided in Annex A. Further, we worked closely with the [Social Protection Approaches to COVID-19 – Expert Advice Helpline \(SPACE\)](#)<sup>20</sup> country focal points, to draw on their experiences, share data collected, and reduce the burden on key stakeholders.

To assess the adequacy, coverage, and comprehensiveness of the social protection response to COVID-19 in Uganda, we drew on the results of a microsimulation study conducted by the IGC (referred to above). While we had initially planned to conduct the microsimulation in all six Maintains countries ourselves, the methodology used by the IGC in Uganda was very close to our methodology and therefore, in the interests of time and efficiency, and to reduce duplication, we draw on their findings in this report.

## 2.3 Limitations

This study is designed to be a rapid appraisal of the initial phases of the ongoing social protection response to COVID-19 in Uganda. The study has the following limitations:

- Due to widespread travel restrictions, we have not been able to conduct in-country primary data collection at the household level. Therefore, this study does not assess fully how these social protection responses have been implemented in practice, but rather focuses on the design features of the chosen response options and – as far as possible – the reasons for choosing a given response.
- At the time of the research, the flagship social protection response to COVID-19 in Uganda, the Urban Cash for Work Programme (UCWP), had not yet been piloted or launched. Therefore, there remain gaps in our research as full operational details of the programme are not yet finalised or publicly available. While this limits the depth of analysis, we hope the study provides insights on the early response, as well as directions for future research.

We welcome future research that examines various aspects of the response more comprehensively.

## 2.4 Quality assurance

The design, methodology, and resulting reports for this series of studies have been subject to a rigorous process of quality assurance. The methodology has received inputs from colleagues at SPACE and external quality assurance has been provided by experts selected specifically for this assignment. All outputs from this study have also been subject to a thorough process of review, with each report internally peer reviewed by a senior social protection expert and the study team leader prior to submission to external quality assurance.

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<sup>20</sup> SPACE is a multi-disciplinary ‘ask-the-experts’ service offered to government departments working to deliver social protection responses to COVID-19. SPACE provides independent and unbiased, practical, and actionable advice, drawing upon up-to-date global evidence, relevant experience, tailor-made tools, and a suite of thematic briefing papers to support effective and inclusive decision-making.

## 3 Overview of social protection responses

This section provides an overview of the main social protection responses that have been implemented or that will be implemented by the GoU in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These are summarised in Table 1, in Section 3.5.

**As outlined in the [conceptual framework](#), the first dimension of the social protection response to COVID-19 encompasses strategies to minimise disruptions to routine delivery of benefits and services.** While the focus of this case study is on responses implemented to cover *new* vulnerabilities, it is equally important to acknowledge that the pandemic could have potentially impacted the timely delivery of benefits and services to *existing* beneficiaries receiving regular support. Section 3.1 identifies examples of how a subset of programmes were tweaked to minimise disruptions to service delivery.

**The second dimension of the response is system adaptation, i.e. how governments adapted to address new vulnerabilities arising from the crisis.** This involves two types of strategies: i) increasing the benefit levels provided to existing beneficiaries, in recognition of their increased vulnerability; and ii) extending coverage to new beneficiaries via existing and/or new programmes. We describe these strategies in Sections 3.2 and 3.3.

### 3.1 Examples of system resilience, i.e. maintaining operational continuity during COVID-19

The social protection response to COVID-19 in Uganda has included a number of actions to minimise disruptions to routine delivery of benefits and services:

#### **Adapting SOPs to regain business continuity**

Between March and June 2020, payments to existing beneficiaries of the SCG were paused while the GoU developed SOPs to guide the safe disbursement of cash transfers. The SOPs outline measures to avoid crowding (e.g. moving pay points from sub-counties to parishes), limit physical contact, and reduce transaction times (e.g. banks taking pictures of beneficiaries, rather than capturing fingerprints). Further, where possible, banks were asked to record beneficiaries' mobile money details, to be used for future payments.

As part of the SCG's national roll-out, mobilisation messaging was adapted to include COVID-19 prevention communication, including delivering COVID-19 messages to SCG beneficiaries at pay points.

#### **Extending lump-sum payments to beneficiaries**

Beneficiaries of the SCG received lump-sum payments to cover six months, to reduce the number of times beneficiaries needed to collect the money. The lump-sum payments were disbursed in June 2020 to cover arrears accrued prior to and during the COVID-19 lockdown (MGLSD, 2020). Another payment was made in October/November 2020 to cover the July to December payment cycle.



### **Honouring financing commitments to facilitate continuity**

It is noteworthy that, in the midst of the pandemic, and despite significant additional demands on domestic resources, the GoU honoured 100% of the existing budgetary commitments to the SCG. In the course of 2020, the MGLSD was able to make all payments in arrears to existing beneficiaries of the SCG, and to roll-out the programme to a further 71 districts to cover all Ugandan citizens over 80, as had been planned prior to the pandemic.

### **Changing the modality of service delivery**

The Girls Empowering Girls initiative quickly developed a short-term mentorship curriculum that was suitable for being implemented over the phone, rather than the previous practice of in-person engagement. The ability to make mentoring virtual was possible as the programme issues a mobile phone to each participant. The programme also implemented remote enrolment for pre-registered beneficiaries.<sup>21</sup>

## **3.2 Increasing the adequacy of benefits provided to existing beneficiaries**

Benefit levels were increased for a subset of existing beneficiaries of NUSAF3 and DRDIP. Emergency cash transfers were provided to 13,200 pregnant and breastfeeding women and children under the age of two, including refugees, who were already enrolled in the NUSAF3 or DRDIP public works programmes and who resided in selected districts in the West Nile sub-region. Payments occurred in November and December 2020,<sup>22</sup> and consisted of a lump-sum payment of UGX 144,000 (approximately £29) per registered beneficiary. The initiative was implemented by the GoU, with support from the WFP and funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), and aimed to meet the nutritious food needs of these beneficiaries over a period of three months (WFP, 2020).

## **3.3 Extending support to new beneficiaries**

The MGLSD's UCWP is a LIPW that was designed in response to the triple shocks Uganda experienced in 2020: COVID-19, a locust invasion in Karamoja/Northern Uganda, and flash flooding. The UCWP aims to target 529,500 people in 16 urban centres and 16 flood-affected districts of Uganda. The design of the UCWP is aligned with the LIPW guidelines. Once a community project is established, households will be allowed to work for 12 days a month, with a maximum cap of two working months per year. Remuneration will be a daily rate of UGX 6,500 (£1.28) for all work, with working hours differentiated for men (four to five hours) and women (three hours). The programme was intended to be piloted in Arua (with funding from the International Labour Organization (ILO)), prior to a full roll-out, although the pilot had not yet been implemented at the time of writing (February 2021).

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<sup>21</sup> See [www.girlsempoweringgirls.org/](http://www.girlsempoweringgirls.org/)

<sup>22</sup> In addition, 43,300 women and children who are part of the Mother and Child Health and Nutrition initiative will receive two-months' worth of support (UGX 96,000 or £19).

Further details on the design, implementation, and operations of the UCWP can be found in Sections 5 and 6.

### **3.4 Social assistance responses considered but not implemented**

During the initial phase of the pandemic, a number of additional social protection responses were considered by the GoU and development partners, but ultimately not implemented, owing to limited political support for unconditional cash transfers. The social protection measures considered are briefly described below:

- The MGLSD considered a horizontal expansion of the SCG by lowering the age of eligibility in existing districts, but was unable to secure funds for this expansion. Key informants noted that the view was that it would be politically difficult to both communicate that the expansion would be temporary and then subsequently roll back support at the end of the crisis.
- A condition of the World Bank financing for the Ugandan COVID-19 response (see Section 4.1) was that a social protection intervention be implemented. As part of these discussions with the GoU, consideration was initially given to an unconditional cash transfer for children under the age of two, targeted at districts with the highest levels of multi-dimensional poverty. However, this was not approved by the GoU as it did not wish to provide unconditional support, and it also wanted to focus support on the areas and populations most affected by COVID-19 (e.g. urban areas and informal sector workers). The social protection response ultimately supported by the World Bank took the form of the UCWP (see Section 3.3).
- The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) committed US\$ 10 million (£7.3 million) of funding to deliver unconditional cash transfers to 120,000 Ugandans who have lost their livelihoods as a result of COVID-19 restrictions.<sup>23</sup> The programme, which was implemented by GiveDirectly, in partnership with KCCA, began in August 2020, but GiveDirectly's operations were subsequently suspended in September 2020 pending an investigation by the National Bureau for NGOs (Devex, 2020). Although the programme was approved by the national cabinet of ministers prior to implementation, the suspension letter noted that the programme was likely to make Ugandans lazy and to promote idleness, among other reasons given.<sup>24</sup> GiveDirectly's suspension also had implications for the Girls Empowering Girls programme: as GiveDirectly is the implementing partner for the cash transfer component of that programme, the programme was no longer able to make cash transfer payments.

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<sup>23</sup> This programme was going to be jointly funded by the UK's FCDO. The UK had committed £3.8 million to the programme, prior to GiveDirectly's suspension, which was yet to be transferred to GiveDirectly.

<sup>24</sup> A memorandum of understanding set to expire on 31 December 2020, titled 'Cash relief for COVID-19: Providing a Lifeline for low-income Households in Kampala Capital City and selected districts', was signed between GiveDirectly and Minister of Kampala and Metropolitan Affairs Betty Amongi and Minister of Local Government Raphael Magyezi on 17 April 2020 (Observer, 2020).

### 3.5 Other social protection measures implemented

The core focus of this paper is the UCWP, which is led by the GoU, as it is the primary response to COVID-19, which is designed to align with the existing national social protection system. However, in addition to this programme and the other measures described above, the GoU and other agencies have introduced a number of one-off policies and interventions that are intended to offset income losses due to the pandemic. These measures, which are not discussed further in this paper as they are not inherently linked to the national social protection system, include the following:

- A food distribution programme implemented by the Office of the Prime Minister.<sup>25</sup> See Box 1 for further details.
- A National Special Grant for people with disabilities (PWD), led by the MGLSD, was disbursed to PWD groups of five to 15 people across Uganda. Initially, UGX 2 billion was set aside to reach 200 PWD groups, but this was later increased in December 2020 to UGX 5 billion to support 800 PWD groups (The Independent, 2020). While the grant was designed before the onset of the pandemic, the decision to make payments during the crisis was taken in order to support the livelihoods and economic activities of PWD during the lockdown (Akina Mama wa Afrika, 2020).
- Measures that allow businesses/employers facing economic distress due to COVID-19 to reschedule NSSF contributions for the next three months without accumulating a penalty.<sup>26</sup>
- A temporary ban (final quarter of financial year 2020) by the GoU on disconnecting utility services (water, electricity) for vulnerable consumers (World Bank, 2020a).
- A Presidential request that landlords not evict tenants who have failed to pay their rent, resulting in some landlords offering a three-month grace period during the lockdown (Daily Monitor, 2020a).
- Cash assistance provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to all registered urban refugees and asylum seekers in Kampala (around 80,000) to contribute towards rent and essential items (Khan, 2020).
- Repayment holidays, loan tenor extensions, and other debt restructuring options granted by the Bank of Uganda on a case by case basis (Bank of Uganda, 2020).
- A fee waiver by Stanbic Bank for 30 days during the lockdown on payments for utilities, television, online banking, and mobile money transactions (CGTN Africa, 2020).
- A fee waiver by telephone and network operators MTN and Airtel on mobile money transfers below UGX 30,000 (approximately £6) for 30 days during the lockdown (Xinhua, 2020).

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<sup>25</sup> The MGLSD was initially consulted in order to inform the programme's targeting approach, but recommendations to target specific vulnerable groups were not taken up, according to key informants, resulting in the programme being implemented entirely outside the social protection sector.

<sup>26</sup> See <https://twitter.com/nssfug/status/1244987818314784769>

### **Box 1: Food distribution**

From 4 April 2020, the Office of the Prime Minister implemented an initiative targeted at urban poor people who were unable to earn a living as a result of lockdown. The initiative provided a one-off distribution of: 6 kg of maize flour (posho), 3 kg of beans, and a portion (unspecified) of salt per household member. 'The elderly, sick and pregnant women' also received an additional 2 kg of powdered milk and 2 kg of sugar (Nangonzi, 2020). The distribution exercise aimed at reaching 1.5 million vulnerable households in Kampala and Wakiso districts living in informal settlements. Mukono District was also initially included in the distribution districts; however, a lack of fuel meant that transporting the food from Kampala to Mukono was challenging (Daily Monitor, 2020b). According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, after 37 days, 1,385,000 people (372,397 households) had received food rations (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Data on the final beneficiary numbers once distribution was concluded were not publicly available. Food parcels were made available to all households in the targeted geographic areas and there were no processes for registration, verification, or enrolment. Distribution took place door-to-door in order to avoid large gatherings at central distribution points, and also to help ensure that support to households was not duplicated.

The GoU allocated UGX 59.4 billion (£11.8 million) to the Ministry of Disaster Preparedness and Refugees for the initiative (Parliament of the Republic of Uganda, 2020). This covered the cost of purchasing the food items, as well as the cost for the Uganda People's Defence Force to distribute the items (UGX 4.3 billion, or £840,897) and for the Office of the Prime Minister to coordinate the distribution (UGX 1 billion, or £197,883) (Nambatya, 2020).

**Table 1: Summary of social protection responses**

Response	Caseload	Geographic coverage	Eligibility <sup>1</sup>	Transfer value	COVID-19 resilience	Implementing agency	Link to social protection sector
<b>System resilience</b>							
<b>SCG</b>	379,000 individuals	National	Aged 60+ in Karamoja; aged 65+ in 15 pilot districts; aged 80+ elsewhere	UGX 25,000 (£5) per month	Developed SOPs for payment and registration/enrolment of new beneficiaries; provision of lump-sum payments	MGLSD	Regular cash transfer programme
<b>Girls Empowering Girls</b>	1,500 girls	Kampala	750 girls at risk of not transitioning to secondary school; 750 adolescent out-of-school girls	UGX 160,000 (£32) three times a year	Implemented remote mentoring activities	KCCA, with support from UNICEF	Regular cash plus programme
<b>Adaptation: Vertical expansion</b>							
<b>WFP top-up</b>	13,200 individuals	West Nile	Pregnant and lactating women; children under two	One-off transfer of UGX 144,000 (£29)	Provision of lump-sum payments	WFP	Targeting and payment through LIPWs
<b>Adaptation: New programmes</b>							
<b>UCWP</b>	525,000 households (~63,000 affected by flood; ~462,000 affected by COVID-19)	16 urban centres and 16 flood-affected areas	Ugandan citizens <sup>27</sup> with a national ID card affected by COVID-19 whose households are female-headed with four plus family members, or who have one child under five, or who have a member who lost paid employment or faces eviction; Ugandan citizens with a national ID card residing in flood-affected areas	1.75 UGX per day for 12 days per month, two months per year	SOPs developed for LIPWs to adhere to social distancing; payment using mobile money	MGLSD	Alignment with LIPW guidelines

<sup>27</sup> Key informants stated that the UCWP will target Ugandan citizens, while the ILO's (2020) pilot announcement stated that the UCWP will aim for 20% inclusion of refugees.

## 4 Policy

In this section, we discuss the enabling environment which supports operationalisation of the GoU's social protection response to COVID-19 (i.e. the UCWP). We focus on the financing of the response; relevant legislation, policies, and strategies; governance and mandates with regard to social protection; and coordination of the overall social protection response.

### 4.1 Financing

The UCWP, the GoU's flagship social protection response, will first be implemented as a pilot, which was expected to take place in Arua in October 2020 (ILO, 2020), after which the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED) would approve the fund disbursement for the full programme. The pilot phase will be funded with a grant of approximately US\$ 300,000 through the ILO's PROSPECTS programme,<sup>28</sup> while the national roll-out will be funded by the World Bank: US\$ 35 million (£26 million) of the Bank's US\$ 300 million (£220 million) concessional financing agreement was earmarked for the UCWP LIPW (World Bank, 2020a). At the time of writing (February 2021), the pilot had not been implemented and the funds for the full UCWP had not yet been approved for disbursement to the MGLSD by the MoFPED and Solicitor General.<sup>29</sup>

### 4.2 Legislation, policies, and strategies

As discussed in Section 1.2, the social protection sector is nascent, with a vision to expand coverage and enhance shock-responsiveness. However, at present, there is neither legislation in place nor an institutional framework to standardise shock-responsive social protection in Uganda.

While there are no sector level policies to facilitate shock response, shock response is being integrated into social protection programmes. The primary instrument for shock response is through NUSAF3 in Karamoja, which has been designed to scale up horizontally and vertically in response to droughts in the region (see Box 2). However, this framework could not be used in the response to COVID-19 as the trigger for fund disbursement is specifically linked to droughts.

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<sup>28</sup> PROSPECTS is a partnership initiative working on forced displacement that focuses on improving the access of refugees and their host communities to educational and employment and livelihoods opportunities, while strengthening the protection environment in eight countries, including Uganda. PROSPECTS is funded by the Government of the Netherlands. For more information, see ILO (2019).

<sup>29</sup> Key informant interview with MGLSD.

**Box 2: Uganda's framework for scale-up**

In Karamoja, in the Northern region of Uganda, NUSAF3 has been designed to respond to drought by enrolling new households in the programme (horizontal expansion) or offering existing beneficiaries additional days of work (vertical expansion). Through NUSAF3's disaster risk financing sub-component, led by the National Emergency Coordination and Operations Centre (NECOC) in the Office of the Prime Minister, the GoU developed a scalable social protection mechanism to enable the GoU to cost-effectively and rapidly increase financial assistance to households in response to early warning indicators of drought. The primary trigger for scale-up is the Normalised Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) at the district level. The NDVI is observed on a 14-day basis, and an average score is calculated for each district in Karamoja for each calendar month. While the NDVI is an early warning indicator, and alone is not sufficient to declare a drought emergency, the programme takes a 'no regrets' approach to scale-up, by releasing funds well before late-onset effects of drought occur (e.g. livestock mortality). The GoU has established a US\$ 10 million contingent line of credit to finance these shock-responsive scale-ups.

Under DRDIP, a response mechanism has been established but the scalability framework, including triggers for response, has not yet been finalised.

Source: GoU (2016a), Bowen *et al.* (2020).

In general, the GoU's response to the pandemic has been guided by the national COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan for the period March 2020 to June 2021 (Ministry of Health, 2020a). The plan provides a framework for 'coordination and control of COVID-19 by reduction of importation, transmission, morbidity and mortality in a bid to minimize the social economic disruption that might result from this outbreak'. The plan outlines the GoU's preparedness and response strategy, as well as discussing eight intervention pillars. Pillar 6: Community Engagement and Social Protection recognises that the pandemic will affect the most vulnerable Ugandans, particularly those living in rural areas and refugee-hosting communities, and is likely to disrupt essential health and social services and exacerbate incidences of gender-based violence (GBV). The pillar states that a community engagement and social protection committee for COVID-19 will be established at the national level (although this was not mentioned by key informants when discussing coordination) and will support implementation of social protection interventions for the vulnerable populations. Details on any specific social protection interventions are not mentioned in the plan or the plan's logframe indicators.

**4.3 Governance and coordination**

The response to COVID-19 in Uganda has been led by the National Taskforce for COVID-19, chaired by the Prime Minister, and Pillar 6 of the Preparedness and Response Plan has been led by the Department of Community Health. However, the country's flagship social protection response – the UCWP – is coordinated outside of this Taskforce.

In the initial phase of the COVID-19 response, key informants noted that the social protection donor working group, a forum chaired by Irish Aid and WFP and intended to serve the needs of donors in relation to routine social protection, met on a weekly basis (rather than every two to three months, as was the case prior to the pandemic). The working group is usually only attended by donors but it was noted that during the pandemic, the meetings were designed to ensure that the GoU (particularly the MGLSD) was engaged and participated in the meetings.

The aim of the meetings is to feed into the discussions and decisions of the National Taskforce for COVID-19. However, in reality, the extent of coordination efforts has been limited given that only one social protection response has been approved and will be implemented. Coordination for the UCWP takes place between the MGLSD, the World Bank, and the ILO, and key informants noted that these meetings take place frequently, although on an *ad hoc* basis.



## 5 Design

The UCWP has three main aims: (i) to provide income to the most vulnerable families affected by COVID-19 in urban areas and by flooding in rural areas (including labour-constrained families); (ii) to impart skills to participating beneficiaries; and (iii) to create assets that positively impact beneficiaries' communities.

Broadly speaking, the design, implementation, and operations of the UCWP are based on the 'National Guideline for the Planning and Implementation of Labour-Intensive Public Works' (MGLSD, 2016). In addition, key informants noted that most of the design features of the UCWP are based on NUSAF3 (which is in turn based on the National Guideline). The full details of the UCWP have not yet been published, although the broad parameters of the initiative are outlined in a GoU Concept Note from June 2020 which was discussed by key informants. There may be some adjustments once the programme has been piloted.

The third objective of the UCWP is the creation of community assets. In urban areas, projects such as the rehabilitation of community access roads, cleaning and de-silting drainage canals, and solid waste collection and disposal will be considered. The project investment menu does not include projects specifically related to COVID-19. In rural areas, projects such as the rehabilitation of community access roads, the construction of soil and water conservation structures, and planting tree seedlings will be considered.

### 5.1 Eligibility criteria

The UCWP is targeted at households and will enrol one beneficiary per four household members. (Unlike many social protection responses to COVID-19 in the region, it is notable that this provision would entitle more than one household member to participate in the programme if the household has five or more members.) Beneficiaries will need to be Ugandan citizens and will need a national ID card to enrol.<sup>30</sup>

The UCWP consists of two components: an urban component (for 462,000 households affected by COVID-19 in 16 urban centres), and a rural component (for 63,000 households in 16 districts affected by natural disaster in 2020 – flooding and locusts). Under both components, labour-constrained households will be eligible to receive direct income support (i.e. the labour requirement is waived).<sup>31</sup>

#### 5.1.1 Urban component

The UCWP is targeting 11 cities and five municipalities which have large numbers of informal workers. Within these 16 urban areas, the programme will target informal settlements, as well as areas with poor and vulnerable households, in particular low-wage

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<sup>30</sup> Key informants stated that the UCWP will target Ugandan citizens with a national ID card only. However, the ILO's (2020) pilot announcement stated that the UCWP will aim for 20% inclusion of refugees. It is not clear whether this will apply to the pilot only or full programme.

<sup>31</sup> This includes households with chronically ill members, persons with severe disabilities, frail older persons not receiving the SCG, child-headed households, women from the sixth months of pregnancy, and lactating mothers in the first 10 months after birth.

earners and refugees. Households that meet at least one of the following criteria will be considered for the programme.<sup>32</sup>

- female-headed households having at least four family members;
- all households that have at least one child younger than five years of age;
- a person who lost paid employment or means of livelihood during the lockdown;
- households facing eviction due to failure to pay rent arrears.

If a greater number of eligible and interested households are identified in an area than the designated caseload, households will be ranked according to the number of criteria they meet and the most vulnerable households will be invited to enrol first.

### 5.1.2 Rural component

16 flood-prone districts were identified for the rural component of the UCWP and, within these, the programme will target parishes that faced large agricultural losses due to flooding in 2020. All households in an area where a flood occurred 10 months prior to the programme's launch will be eligible for the programme, subject to two conditions: (i) household members are willing to participate in the programme; and (ii) households meet one of the following criteria:

- crops planted by the household were destroyed by the flood;
- the household lost productive assets, such as livestock, in the flood; and/or
- shelter previously used by the household was severely damaged by the flood.

The details of the registration, verification, and enrolment processes are described in Section 6.2.

## 5.2 Transfer level, frequency, and duration

The UCWP aims to reach a large number of beneficiaries over a relatively short period of time, given the system-wide shocks of COVID-19 and flooding. Beneficiaries of the UCWP will be paid a daily wage rate of UGX 6,500 (£1.28) per day for 12 days per month and two months per year.<sup>33</sup> Men will be required to work a maximum of five hours per day while women will be required to work a maximum of three hours per day, to account for childcare and other household responsibilities. The wage rate is set slightly below the median market wage for self-employed workers, in line with the LIPW guidelines.<sup>34</sup> This is to encourage only those that do not have alternative and/or better employment opportunities to apply (World Bank, 2020a).

While the UCWP's design is aligned with the national LIPW guidelines, key informants noted that certain guidelines have been adapted due to the emergency nature of the programme.

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<sup>32</sup> The final eligibility criteria may be subject to change once the programme has been piloted.

<sup>33</sup> Beneficiaries of NUSAF3 are able to work for 54 days per year.

<sup>34</sup> According to the guidelines, 'the LIPW wage rate has to be far enough below the prevailing local market wage rate to attract only those in need of temporary work. However, it also has to be high enough to provide a meaningful level of transfer' (MGLSD, 2016).

For example, in other programmes, participants are paid UGX 5,500 (£1.10) per day but are obliged to save UGX 1,500 (£0.30) of that in a savings group, as a mandatory requirement. This has been waived for the UCWP. Further, in NUSAF3/DRDIP, 10% of project funds are allocated to direct income support for labour-constrained households. However, in the UCWP, this will be increased to 20% of project funds.

## 6 Implementation and operations

This section discusses the implementation processes underlying the UCWP. As with the design of the programme (Section 5), the implementation and operational details will be finalised on the basis of learning from the ILO's pilot in Arua.

The UCWP is being implemented by the MGLSD, while NUSAF3 and DRDIP (the other LIPWs) are implemented by the Office of the Prime Minister. However, MGLSD will receive technical support from the technical working group on LIPW (in addition to support from the World Bank and ILO), which brings together senior officers from relevant ministries and other organisations<sup>35</sup> involved in implementing LIPWs.

While the UCWP has been designed to piggyback on the existing delivery systems used for NUSAF3/DRDIP, those programmes only exist in rural areas. Therefore, while the infrastructure for the LIPWs is already in place and has been tested in rural areas, the necessary implementation systems will need to be established in urban areas where existing LIPWs are not operational.

As a starting point, it is useful to clarify the administrative structures that support the operational processes of the NUSAF3/DRDIP. The key actors are as follows (MGLSD, 2016):

- At the community level, a Community Project Management Committee (CPMC) is established in each community implementing an LIPW. The CPMC is a community-based organisation which is instrumental in the planning and implementation of the LIPW.
- At the district level, a Community Development Officer (CDO) is the focal person for the coordination of LIPWs at the district level. The CDO is supported by the District Technical Planning Committee to help facilitate sectoral integration.
- Similarly, at the sub-county level, a sub-county CDO is the focal person for the coordination of LIPWs, and is supported by the sub-county Technical Planning Committee.

### 6.1 Outreach and communications

Full details of the outreach and communications strategy were not available at the time of the research. However, according to key informants, the outreach and communications strategies that will be used by the UCWP will be aligned with the communication channels used by the existing LIPWs (NUSAF3 and DRDIP) and the SCG. In particular, the programme will use local radio to sensitise potential beneficiaries about the programme, a method which has been effective in other programmes, such as the SCG. Local government administrative structures and implementation structures up to the village level will also share

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<sup>35</sup> This includes the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, the Ministry of Water and Environment, the Ministry of Local Government, the Ministry of Works and Transport, donors, bilateral institutions, and NGO representatives.

information about the programme, and parish chiefs will be involved in mobilisation efforts. At the time of the research, the programme was developing the materials.

## **6.2 Beneficiary registration, verification, and enrolment**

The UCWP will target new beneficiaries, primarily residing in urban areas, and who are unlikely to be covered by the existing social protection programmes. Therefore, the GoU will not be able to draw on existing data for the purposes of targeting the emergency programmes and new registration, verification, and enrolment activities will need to be undertaken.

For both components (urban and rural), the UCWP will follow a two-step targeting process: geographic targeting and household targeting.

### **Geographic targeting**

The programme will target urban areas selected on the basis of data provided by the Department of Disaster Preparedness and Management, and by municipal and town councils. Identification of the eligible wards and local council zones will be done by the Executive Councils of the Urban Centres (which are chaired by the respective mayors) and the Technical Planning Committees (chaired by the town clerks or executive directors). Urban areas will be selected using the following data: size of slum; number of low-income and informal sector workers; number of urban refugees; poverty rates; severity of COVID-19 outbreaks; severity of COVID-19 containment measures; number of jobs lost etc.

In rural areas, communities will be identified by the District Executive Committee and the Technical Planning Committee. These bodies will select communities based on indicators such as the level of flooding in the past 10 months and the loss of property and livelihoods due to flooding.

### **Targeting beneficiaries**

Beneficiaries will be targeted using two approaches: categorical targeting (involving proactive outreach to vulnerable households) and self-targeting (where households are asked to indicate their interest in participating).

For categorical targeting, village and zonal councils, as well as representatives of women, youth, PWD, elderly people etc., will identify potential beneficiaries for the programme considering the eligibility criteria (outlined above in Section 5.1). Those identified as eligible will be invited to register to participate in the UCWP and, if they are willing to work,<sup>36</sup> will be enrolled in the programme.

Categorical targeting will be complemented by a self-targeting process whereby potential beneficiaries interested in participating in the programme can approach the CPMCs. According to World Bank (2020a) documentation, those interested in participating in public works will complete a simple questionnaire using either a phone-based application or on paper. The questionnaire will comprise a set of simple questions that will be used to assess

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<sup>36</sup> This criterion does not apply to labour-constrained households that qualify for direct income support.

household vulnerability (e.g. education of household head, household size) and job status within the household (e.g. household member lost a job, type of livelihood activities). Details on this application, including the type of data collected and whether it will indeed be implemented as part of the full roll-out of the programme, were not available at the time of writing.

### **Verification**

While the World Bank (2020a) project documentation states that the national ID number of beneficiaries will be verified against the National Identification Registration Authority database, key informants suggested an alternative process would occur: beneficiaries will not be required to present any documentation or proof of eligibility as part of the validation process, apart from their national ID card, as the programme will primarily be reliant on community-based identification and validation of beneficiaries.

## **6.3 Payment and delivery systems**

Daily wages will be paid to UCWP beneficiaries using mobile money, or directly into beneficiaries' bank accounts. However, this is a new approach to social protection payments in Uganda and key informants noted that this approach would need to be piloted before being integrated into the full version of the programme. It is not clear whether the current payment mechanism for routine LIPWs (cash in hand) is considered inappropriate in the COVID-19 context, or if the GoU sees the UCWP as an opportunity to trial the use of mobile money.

The fund flows to UCWP projects will follow the same approach as for NUSAF3. For each project, a project-level bank account will be set up. Project funds will be transferred to the bank account for the procurement of materials and tools, and/or once the district has received proof that the work has been completed. Payments to beneficiaries will take place from the project-level bank account.

### **6.3.1 Delivery of projects**

As with other LIPWs in Uganda, the CDO will support each community in drawing up their project plans for the UCWP, in consultation with the sub-county chief and other relevant stakeholders (e.g. NGOs). The project will then be appraised by technical staff at the sub-county and district level to verify that it adheres to standards and norms, and budgetary requirements, and that it is feasible and sustainable. Details on the gender composition of sub-county and district-level authorities were not available at the time of writing but it is likely that the majority of office holders are male.

Once a project has been agreed and approved, the CPMC will be established to manage the project at the community level. The CPMC will comprise seven members (of which at least 50% should be women) and will be elected by community members. The CPMC will receive technical support from the district, city, or municipal implementation support teams, which

will include technical expertise relevant to the implementation.<sup>37</sup> These support groups will also recruit a local lead artisan (i.e. skilled tradesperson)<sup>38</sup> to ensure that the works are executed in line with norms and standards. In locations where LIPWs are already operational, these structures are already set up and will be used by the UCWP.

Projects will be delivered by community interest groups, comprising 80 to 100 beneficiaries (of which at least 50% should be women), with support from the lead local artisan. A supervisor will verify task completion by taking photos of the beneficiary and tasks accomplished, and will send these to the MIS, which will serve as approval for payment.

## 6.4 Complaints and appeals

Details of the grievance mechanism for the UCWP are not available in documentation, and were not mentioned during key informant interviews. This is in line with a broader observation that grievance mechanisms for routine social protection in Uganda are weak. It is well established that grievances have not been systematically integrated into existing LIPWs (MGLSD, 2019), notwithstanding the LIPW guidelines recognising the importance of efficient grievance mechanisms.

There is also a lack of consistency and harmonisation in the approach to grievances. The LIPW guidelines state that appeals should be dealt with by the CPMC, in the first instance, and escalated to the sub-county and district levels if necessary, whereas complaints regarding the SCG and NUSAF3 are supposed to be provided to community facilitators (parish chief or community artisan).

## 6.5 Case management

We did not find any documented evidence of referrals and linkages to the UCWP.

## 6.6 Monitoring and evaluation

The MGLSD, with technical support from the World Bank, will develop an MIS for the programme to track disbursements, payments etc. Key informants noted that the MIS will be similar to the MIS used for NUSAF3.

The MGLSD will also set up a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system as part of the programme that will be designed to align with the M&E framework developed for the national social protection system. The M&E system will comprise an M&E strategy, a results framework, M&E plans, internal and external periodic assessments and evaluations, and participatory community M&E approaches.

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<sup>37</sup> Reference to these structures is not made in the LIPW guidelines (2016). However, key informants noted that these structures are currently used to deliver other LIPWs.

<sup>38</sup> The artisan should have technical knowledge and proven skills in carrying out the proposed works.

## 7 Assessment of the response

This section provides an assessment of the social protection response to COVID-19 in Uganda in terms of coverage, adequacy, comprehensiveness, and timeliness.

### 7.1 Coverage

Only a quarter of the eligible population will be able to benefit from the UCWP. Building on the microsimulation results from the IGC (Younger *et al.*, 2020), we estimate the likely size of the population that fulfils the eligibility criteria<sup>39</sup> for the UCWP in Kampala and other urban areas. The IGC study predicts that 1.37 million individuals will fall into poverty in these areas because of the pandemic in urban areas, which should correspond to roughly 340,000 households.<sup>40</sup> In theory, all of these households should be eligible for the UCWP because of their income loss. Moreover, based on the Uganda National Household Survey 2016/17, and assuming that 65% of urban households are either female-headed or with one or more child below five years old, we estimate that around 1.85 million urban households will be eligible for UCWP based on demographic information.<sup>41</sup> Finally, if we assume that among households falling into poverty the prevalence of female heads and children below five is the same as the average, it follows that roughly 223,000 of the households falling into poverty will also satisfy the demographic eligibility criteria for the programme. Overall, we calculate that 1.97 million urban households will be eligible for the UCWP, which means that the current coverage will result in approximately 1,508,000 households being eligible for coverage by the programme but unable to participate in it.

#### 7.1.1 Gender equality and social inclusion considerations

The UCWP has been designed to take gender into account and to ensure at least equal representation of men and women in key programme structures, including the community interest groups, CPMCs, as well as committees involved in project identification, appraisal, and procurement. However, there are limited details on how this will be achieved, especially in relation to project identification, which will be conducted by sub-county chiefs and district-level technical staff, who are likely to be men. Further, women are likely to have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 shock. While the UCWP is designed to reach at least 50% female beneficiaries, given the disproportionate impact on women, this is likely to be insufficient from a gender equality and social inclusion perspective.

According to key informants, eligibility for the UCWP will be limited to Ugandan citizens who have a national ID card.<sup>42</sup> Coverage of ID numbers is relatively high in Uganda, with a study by GSMA (2019) finding that 80% of women and 82% of men reported having a national

<sup>39</sup> The only criterion that we cannot replicate is that related to the risk of eviction.

<sup>40</sup> Based on average household size in urban areas of 3.8 individuals as in Uganda National Household Survey 2016/2017. Note that since the UCWP targets one individual out of every four household members on average, every household in urban areas can have only one member in the programme. Therefore, we can assume that for each household there is only one beneficiary.

<sup>41</sup> Based on World Bank-estimated urban population figure (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL?locations=UG>).

<sup>42</sup> However, since Uganda's Refugee Act (2006) allows for refugees to participate in economic activities, the UCWP will aim for 20% of beneficiaries to be refugees (ILO, 2020).



identity document in a 2017 survey. While this is unlikely to be a source of exclusion for women, the focus on Ugandan citizens means that the more than 1.4 million refugees hosted in Uganda will be ineligible for support through the UCWP at a time when food rations supplied by the WFP and other support have also been reduced (Save the Children, 2020).

In order to reach the most vulnerable households, the UCWP will also support labour-constrained households by waiving the labour requirement for these households. Labour-constrained households are households with chronically-ill members, persons with severe disabilities, frail and older persons (not enrolled in the SCG), child-headed households, and households with pregnant and lactating women. While NUSAF3/DRDIP have allocated 10% of funds to labour-constrained households, the UCWP will allocate at least 20% of funds to direct income support for these households. This will go some way towards meeting the additional needs of vulnerable groups (who are especially vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19) but will still only cover a small proportion of those in need.

## 7.2 Adequacy

The value of a monthly UCWP transfer represents 73% and 52% of the consumption of the bottom quartile of households in rural and urban Uganda, respectively. In relation to the programme's objectives as an emergency short-term response, the transfer value is generous. However, while the UCWP is designed as an emergency intervention to cover two months, the protracted nature of the COVID-19 crisis means that households are likely to need more or longer-term support. Table 2 compares the annualised value of the UCWP with the national poverty line, and with the average consumption of the bottom 25% of households in Uganda. It shows that the transfer does not provide a significant support for households that are not able to recover from the shock within the two months of the intervention.

**Table 2: Adequacy of the UCWP**

Measure	Total annual value (UGX) <sup>a</sup>	% of annual national poverty line (household level)	% of annual consumption expenditure of bottom 25% households at baseline	
			Rural	Urban
UCWP	156,000	8%	12%	9%

Notes: <sup>a</sup> Assuming 24 days of work in a year. <sup>b</sup> 2016/17 values updated using annual consumer prices index between fiscal years 2016/17 and 2019/20 (until November 2020), based on data from Uganda Bureau of Statistics.

The IGC microsimulation estimated the mitigation impact of the UCWP in urban and rural areas (Younger *et al.*, 2020). The simulation results show that the estimated impact on poverty reduction is expected to be minimal: overall the post-COVID-19 poverty headcount decreases by 0.3 percentage points, with, as expected given the urban focus of the programme, a stronger impact in Kampala (a 2 percentage points poverty reduction) and other urban areas (a 1.3 percentage points poverty reduction).

### 7.3 Comprehensiveness

Comprehensiveness refers to the extent to which all risks are addressed by the social protection response.

Uganda's COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan (2020) notes that incidents of GBV are likely to rise due to the limits on economic and social activities, restrictions on movement, and the shutting down of schools, all of which place women and girls at heightened risks of intimate partner violence and other forms of exploitation and sexual violence. The document also notes that life-saving care and support to GBV survivors is limited and may be disrupted due to the pandemic. Key informants noted that NGOs, jointly with MGLSD, had implemented interventions to prevent violence against women and girls, which escalated during the lockdown, including establishing helplines. Further, shelters for victims of GBV remained functional during the lockdown and the GoU supplied food to shelters, operated by NGOs.

However, we did not find evidence of additional interventions that were layered upon social protection responses to comprehensively address the additional risks faced by those affected by COVID-19.

### 7.4 Timeliness

The UCWP, an emergency LIPW, had neither been piloted nor rolled out at the time of writing (February 2021).<sup>43</sup> There are a number of reasons for the delays to roll-out. First, the financing agreement with the World Bank was only approved on 29 June 2020. As discussed in Section 3.4, as part of its funding for the Ugandan COVID-19 response, the World Bank required that the GoU implement a social protection response to COVID-19; however, the World Bank and the GoU discussed a number of alternative designs before agreeing to implement an LIPW. Second, programme approval from MoFPED has slowed down implementation. As at February 2021, the MGLSD had not yet received official approval (or funds) from the Treasury to implement the full UCWP. This is in part due to the timing of the pilot, which was delayed to take place after the national elections in January 2021, as full programme approval is only expected once the pilot has taken place. Finally, the UCWP will take time to set up as the programme is targeting areas not covered by existing LIPWs, so the programme will need to get the infrastructure in place.<sup>44</sup>

Overall, the UCWP has not been implemented in time to meet the needs of households that arose during the COVID-19 containment measures implemented between March and June 2020.

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<sup>43</sup> The pilot was initially expected to take place in July 2020.

<sup>44</sup> Key informant interview with World Bank.

## 8 Conclusions and emerging lessons

In Section 8.1, we present the conclusions, based on the description of the design and implementation of the social protection responses and the assessment of the response presented above. Section 8.2 sets out a number of implications for policy, based on the lessons learned from this response.

### 8.1 Conclusions

**The stringent lockdown measures and global economic slowdown are likely to have a large impact on poverty in Uganda**, with an estimated 3.3 million additional people falling into poverty (an increase in the national poverty rate from 18.9% pre-crisis to 26.8% post-crisis, which will be most severe in urban areas). In addition to the impact of COVID-19, Uganda is also dealing with the negative impacts of the locust invasion in April 2020 and the flooding and landslides in May 2020.

**Aside from an initial food distribution programme, the GoU was not able to respond to the negative economic impacts of the shock using existing social protection programmes in 2020.** In the first three months of the pandemic (March–June 2020) the SCG was forced to pause operations while SOPs were developed to facilitate safe cash disbursements and registration and enrolment activities for the roll-out (planned and announced prior to the COVID-19 crisis), such that existing programme beneficiaries did not receive their transfers during this period. In terms of new programmes, the GoU considered a number of programme designs, and ultimately was able to negotiate and design a new emergency LIPW (the UCWP) to extend support to those affected by COVID-19 in urban areas and by flooding in rural areas. However, the programme had been neither piloted nor rolled out at the time of writing (February 2021).

**After a three-month pause, the GoU was able to establish SOPs for the SCG to facilitate safe payments and expansion activities (registration, enrolment etc.).** Once the SOPs were in place, the GoU was able to make lump-sum payments to existing beneficiaries (including in arrears) and to complete the national roll-out of the programme, showing a commitment to routine social protection by guarding financial commitments to the SCG's scale-up in a time of unprecedented demands on the national budget.

**The design of the UCWP reflects the GoU's strong preference for conditional cash transfers over unconditional transfers.** While discussions took place on possible unconditional responses to the pandemic, including a cash transfer for children under two or a temporary horizontal expansion of the SCG, there was limited political support for this approach (as reflected in the backlash to USAID/GiveDirectly's cash transfer) due to the anticipated political opposition to rolling back support after the crisis. In addition, the GoU preferred a response that was more targeted at those directly affected by the pandemic, i.e. informal workers and poor households residing in urban areas, rather than the broader targeting that would take place under other proposals.

**The GoU has begun to invest in planning and preparing for shock-responsive social protection, but existing mechanisms could not be leveraged for the COVID-19 response.** Further, existing LIPWs were not ideally placed for the COVID-19 response given

their rural focus. Under NUSAF3, the GoU has developed a framework for scalability, which outlines various dimensions of responding to a shock, including institutional arrangements, early warning triggers, and sources of contingency financing. However, this is narrowly focused on responding to drought emergencies in the Northern region of Uganda and was not used for the COVID-19 shock, or the concurrent climatic (floods, locusts) shocks – thus indicating the rigidity of the framework. The flagship social protection response to COVID-19 – the UCWP – is therefore being financed, coordinated, and governed outside of the institutional arrangements in place for shock response through NUSAF3.

**The UCWP is designed to piggyback on the NUSAF3/DRDIP delivery systems, but those programmes are primarily implemented in rural areas, meaning the required infrastructure is limited or non-existent in urban areas.** This will require the UCWP to set up new structures in the urban settings in which it is implemented, and it means the delivery system will be based on an approach which was designed for rural areas. Further, the UCWP will need to undertake a new registration and enrolment process due to the absence of a social registry or any data on potential beneficiaries in the targeted areas. This is likely to further delay the roll-out of the programme and the timing of payments to beneficiaries. In addition, the programme is planning to make use of mobile money to pay beneficiaries – this will be the first time Uganda has used mobile money in a large social protection programme.

**The planned UCWP does not perform well when assessed against the dimensions of coverage, adequacy, comprehensiveness, and timeliness.** The GoU's social protection response to COVID-19 is estimated to reach about a quarter of those impacted by COVID-19, and to meet 9% of the annual consumption expenditure of the bottom 25% households in urban areas. While the response was designed as an emergency response to COVID-19, the protracted nature of the crisis is likely to mean that households have greater needs than was initially anticipated, requiring longer periods of support. The delayed timing of the response has also undermined the programme's objective of meeting the needs of the most vulnerable during the acute phase of this crisis. A lack of dedicated contingency financing (and the need to enter new financing agreements and obtain approval from MoFPED for fund disbursement) has contributed to a severely delayed response.

**While the UCWP has been designed to reach at least 50% female beneficiaries, given the greater impact of COVID-19 on women, the programme's ambitions are likely to be insufficient.** To facilitate women's access to the programme, the working hours will be three hours for women, and five for men, to account for women's caring activities. The programme will also increase the allocation of direct income support (i.e. waive the work requirement) such that 20% of beneficiaries are from vulnerable groups (compared to 10% under NUSAF3 and DRDIP). While gender is considered within several aspects of the project, the programme does not explicitly target other marginalised groups.

## 8.2 Implications for policy

The GoU, with the support of development partners, has been increasing investment in the social protection sector, as well as enhancing the shock-responsiveness of core social assistance programmes (i.e. NUSAF3 and DRDIP). While the latter developments are encouraging in certain respects, a careful balance is required. The social protection sector is still relatively nascent, with limited political space for reform and sector development as the

COVID-19 response has shown. It is, therefore, important that the GoU continues to focus its investments in the core foundational delivery mechanisms that underpin social protection to support routine service provision, while also working in parallel on establishing an enabling environment for shock response – but not to the extent that routine social protection is jeopardised.

The analysis in this case study suggests the following recommendations for routine social protection, in terms of policy development and investing in systems capability:

- In line with the vision for social protection articulated in the National Development Plan, the GoU should focus on **expanding the coverage** of the flagship social assistance programmes, including improving the regional coverage of the programmes. This would also support systems strengthening to support the delivery of shock-responsive social protection in the future. While the SCG has been rolled out nationally, the LIPWs are geographically concentrated, leaving certain regions with very limited social assistance coverage.
- MoFPED should **allocate funds to social protection in line with commitments** outlined in the NSPP and National Development Plan. For example, the GoU has committed to providing a national SCG for all people over 80, paid quarterly. MoFPED needs to ensure that budget is available to make timely quarterly payments and to cover the routine operational costs of the system, such as enrolling those who become eligible for the SCG. To support this, the MGLSD should continue to advocate to MoFPED for additional financing for social protection.
- The GoU has designed and launched an **integrated beneficiary registry**. The Single Registry is potentially a useful tool to coordinate routine social protection, as well as to target and coordinate shock-response. However, to achieve this, the GoU will need to invest in the functionality of the system (beyond software and hardware) and develop protocols and processes that are fit for purpose and that enable people to access and use the data. For example, the Single Registry needs to house good quality, current data to be useful and used by social protection actors and other government departments. Further, the roles and responsibilities, including for maintenance of the database and updating the data, need to be documented as do protocols for accessing data that take issues of data protection and privacy into account.
- There needs to be **investment in the operational capabilities** within and across social assistance programmes, which will also provide a solid foundation for shock response. This includes investing in the basic operational capacity of the SCG and LIPWs including the establishment of case management and grievance mechanisms that are accessible to all programme beneficiaries, including women and marginalised groups, and accompanied by a clear outreach and communications strategy.
- The GoU should also invest in **operationalising the sector-wide monitoring framework**. This would allow the GoU to monitor the capacity of the social protection system, including the system's ability to respond to shocks, and direct investments to areas of the system where capacity or the quality of service delivery is weak.

At the same time, the GoU should consider how investments in the social protection sector can improve the enabling environment for shock response:

- The GoU could benefit from developing a comprehensive **disaster risk financing strategy** that goes beyond the project-based approach to contingency financing currently in place through NUSAF3. However, political commitment to social protection and financing constraints would need to be considered when developing this strategy.
- The capability to respond to shocks has been developed specifically in relation to drought and the GoU should consider how to transition that capability to be able to respond to other shocks. For example, the design of the existing **scalability framework** for shock response under NUSAF3 should be reviewed to allow for greater flexibility to respond to large, non-drought shocks, such as COVID-19 or other climatic shocks, such as flooding or locusts. This could be achieved by stipulating alternative triggers, either specifically related to anticipated shocks (e.g. flood early warning indicators) or broadly to respond to unforeseen shocks where a response may be triggered by the declaration of a state of emergency, for example.
  - As other programmes introduce shock-responsive elements, such as DRDIP, the GoU could look to harmonise programme-level scalability frameworks in a sector-level framework.
- The GoU has developed **processes and systems for operating during and responding to shocks**, through the SCG, which was able to adapt its operations to make payments and roll-out the programme during the pandemic, and NUSAF3. The GoU should leverage this programme-level experience to develop system-level processes and protocols for shock response. This could be achieved by mainstreaming the institutional structure that governs shock response under NUSAF3 to become a body that is responsible for shock-responsive social protection responses in general, rather than only at the programme level or by bringing social protection actors, such as MGLSD, into a coordination body together with NECOC, which is responsible for disaster response.
- In preparation for future responses to shock, the GoU should develop guidelines that establish the key principles and protocols to consider when **designing shock-responsive programmes**. For example, this would include considerations for setting the benefit level such as linking the transfer value to a rationale around meeting household needs and maintaining resilience during the shock, to ensure that the transfers are adequate in relation to their objectives. Similarly, principles for how to incorporate issues of inclusion and sources of marginalisation (e.g. ability, ethnicity, refugee status) in the design of programmes should be articulated in these guidelines.

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## Annex A Stakeholders interviewed

Organisation	Type
<b>MGLSD, Programme Management Unit</b>	Government
<b>World Bank</b>	Development partner
<b>UNICEF</b>	Development partner
<b>WFP</b>	Development partner
<b>FCDO</b>	Development partner
<b>GiveDirectly</b>	NGO
<b>SPACE</b>	Individual