The Social Protection Month 2024; a strong case made for social protection and human capital development

"I want us to imagine a society where very individual regardless of their circumstances has an opportunity to thrive. So that social protection really serves not just as a safety net but a catalyst for human capital development," Professor Pamela Mbabazi, Chairperson, National Planning Authority speaking at the Social Protection National Dialogue 2024.

For the second year running, the Social Protection Community of Practice-Uganda Chapter under the stewardship of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and the Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Social Protection hosted yet another successful Social Protection Month. This brought together stakeholders across the social protection policy and delivery chain in-country and with representation from international players to make a case for social protection to showcase and celebrate the success and potential of social protection in achieving Uganda's national development aspirations.

The Social Protection Month supported with funding from the Embassy of Ireland, UN WFP, UNICEF and ILO was, as the previous year, held in October 2024 under the theme, **"Social Protection as an enabler for Human Capital Development across the Lifecycle"** characterised by series of activities, events and campaigns with multiple stakeholders and the general public at both national and sub-national level climaxing into a High level National Dialogue that was held at the Serena Hotel in Kampala.

Highlights of the Activities during the Month

Webinars

A series of webinars were hosted during the month of webinars to showcase diverse social protection interventions and engage a wide range of stakeholders, including those unable to attend the National Dialogue in person. This initiative aimed to project an Africa-wide Social Protection Month, broadening engagement beyond Uganda to encompass the African social protection landscape. Three webinars were held on various themes with the first being a deep dive into the World Social Protection Report under the theme; The World Social Protection Report 2024; Focus on Uganda. This webinar featured Christina Behrendt, the Head of the Social Policy Unit, Department of Social Protection at the ILO headquarters as the key note speaker with discussions led by Hon Flavia Kabahenda Rwabuhoro, the UPFSP Chairperson, Ms Angella Kasule Nabwowe, the Executive Director. Initiative for Social and Economic Rights and Mr Enoch Mutambi, a Green Skills Specialist at the Ministry of Gender, labour and Social Development.



Drawing from the overall theme of the report,'Universal social protection for climate action and a just transition', the speakers explored Uganda's state in terms of the intersectionality between social protection, climate action and a just transitions but also highlighting global trends.

The second webinar was titled "Shock Responsive Social Protection Experiences from Uganda and the Continent." This featured Dr. Michael Samson, Research Director of the Economic Policy Research Institute, as the keynote speaker, with additional insights from Ms. Bernadette Malungo, Zambia's Social Cash Transfer Manager; Mr. Norbert Katsirabo, Assistant Commissioner for Pacification and Development,

OPM Uganda; and Dr. George Didi Bhoka (MP), a social protection champion with the Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Social Protection. The webinar on shock-responsive social protection highlighted the importance of evolving social protection systems to mitigate the increasing impacts of global shocks. Dr. Michael Samson presented a historical overview of social protection's three waves, noting the progression from cash transfers to integrated, resilience-building programmes, and now toward complex, climate-resilient systems. He emphasized that such systems not only provide immediate support but also foster human capital and economic resilience, particularly in the face of demographic shifts, climate challenges, and technological changes. The discussion underscored the critical role of social protection in supporting economic stability and human development, as shown by Uganda's experiences and forward-looking strategies in alignment with regional and global trends.



The webinar also featured insights from country-specific experiences. Zambia's representative, Bernadette Malungo, discussed the country's approach to expanding social protection to combat poverty exacerbated by economic, environmental, and health-related shocks. She explained how Zambia has developed a multi-sectoral approach involving various government departments, NGOs, and international donors to coordinate and deliver effective social protection. Additionally, Uganda's representatives outlined the government's efforts to enhance social protection through community-based programmes, emphasizing the need for comprehensive coordination and data-driven frameworks for timely responses. The discussions concluded with calls for strategic, inclusive policies that reflect the

multifaceted needs of vulnerable populations in a rapidly changing world.

The last webinar was held under the topic "Gender Responsive Social Protection: Experiences from ongoing programmes in Uganda". This webinar's key note speaker was Lauren Whitehead who is the Social Protection and Gender Lead for UNICEF in New York. It also had local government representation on the Panel including Simon Engabua who is the Acting DCDO Koboko District and Solomon Stalin Mawadri who is the Senior Community Development Officer, Adjumani Microprojects under CSSP. Joyce Atimango, ED Trailblazers Mentoring Foundation was the other panelist.



The second webinar on gender-responsive social protection emphasized the necessity of tailoring social protection programmes to address gender-specific vulnerabilities. Lauren Whitehead from UNICEF

highlighted the unique challenges faced by women and girls globally and in Uganda, including high rates of violence, poverty, and unpaid care burdens. She illustrated how gender-responsive social protection, such as maternity benefits, child benefits, and inclusive social protection policies, could help mitigate these inequalities by providing financial support and addressing structural gender disparities.

Further insights came from Uganda-based programmes, such as the Girls Empowering Girls (GEG) initiative, which focuses on adolescent girls' education, mentorship, and financial support to mitigate vulnerabilities like school dropout and early marriage. The programme 's multi-layered approach involves mentoring, cash transfers, and service referrals, effectively engaging families, communities, and local institutions to sustain impact. Other speakers highlighted efforts to strengthen social protection frameworks, the importance of male involvement in caregiving, and addressing structural barriers that reinforce gender stereotypes. The webinar underscored the need for systematic and sustainable social protection policies to reduce gender inequalities in Uganda and beyond.

Press Conference, 28th October at Uganda Media Centre

Leading up to the Social Protection National Dialogue, the UPFSP held a press conference at the Uganda Media Centre to highlight the National Dialogue and some of its key outputs. The press conference, officiated by the State Minister for Gender and Culture, Hon Peace Mutuuzo, highlighted the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social

Development's commitment to advancing human capital development through social protection initiatives, showcased during Uganda's Social Protection Month 2024. Organized in collaboration with the Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Social Protection and supported by development partners, the month-long event focuses on "Social Protection as an Enabler for Human Capital Development across the Lifecycle." The initiative underscores the role of social protection in addressing key development challenges such as poverty, malnutrition, and unemployment, which hinder Uganda's sustainable growth. The conference also announced a National Dialogue set for October 29th at Serena Hotel, aimed at reviewing Uganda’s social protection progress, launching significant reports, and gathering key stakeholders, including MDAs, academia, CSOs, and the public, to drive collaborative efforts toward comprehensive human capital development.

The multi-partner press conference had representation from UPFSP, MGLSD/ESP, WFP and ILO.



Caption: *A photo collage from the press conference with State Minister for Gender and Culture, Hon Peace Mutuuzo*

The Social Protection National Dialogue held on the 29th October 2024 at Serena Hotel

The National Dialogue centered on Uganda's commitment to advancing social protection and achieving inclusive development. Key discussions revolved around the role of social protection as a foundation for human capital development and a tool to lift vulnerable populations out of poverty. Attendees included government officials, international partners, and social protection advocates who examined the challenges and future directions of Uganda's social protection

programmes. The Social Protection National Dialogue attracted over 250 persons including journalists, social media influencers, LG Officials, MPs and participants from various MDAs and CSOs.



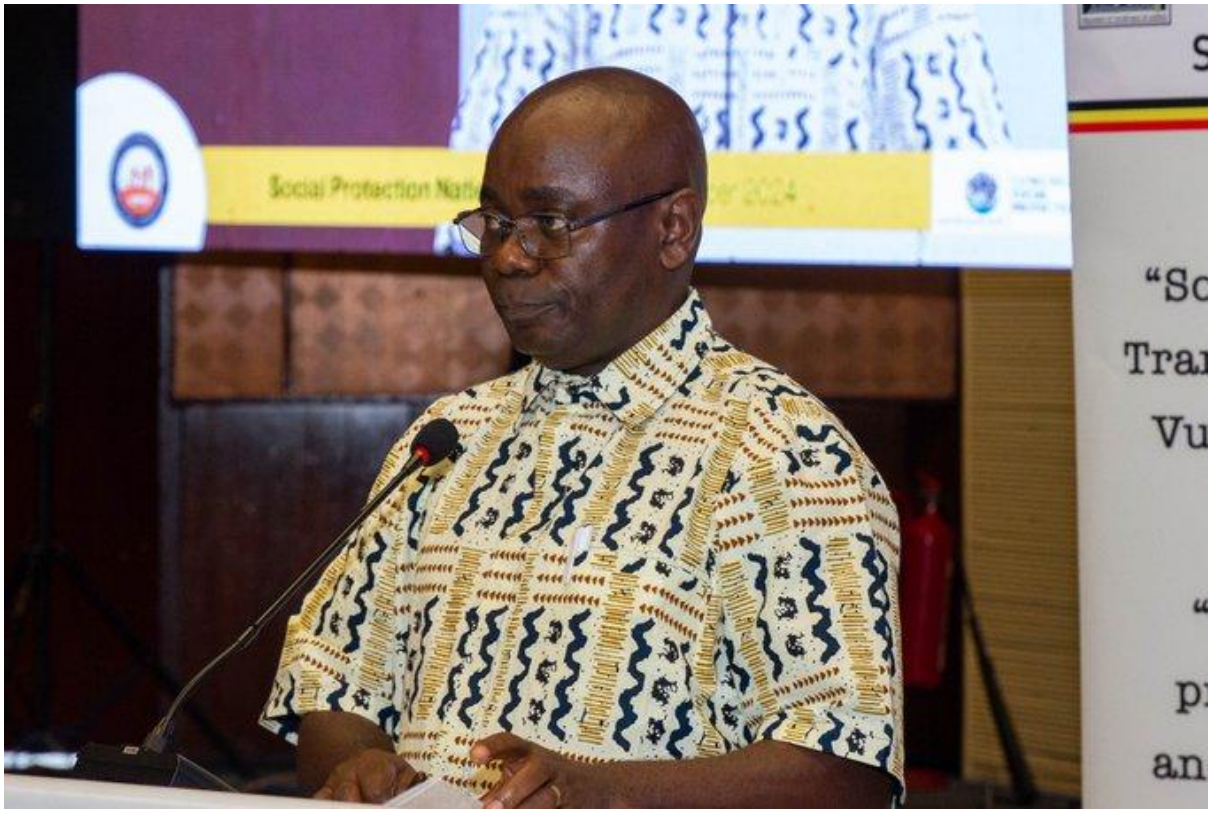
Caption: *A photo collage from the National Dialogue 2024*

Commitments from the Chairperson of the National Development Authority

Professor Pamela Mbabazi reaffirmed the National Planning Authority's dedication to embedding social protection in Uganda's National Development Plan (NDP) IV. She committed to adopting a life-cycle approach that addresses vulnerabilities across all age groups and proposed developing a socioeconomic register to better identify vulnerable populations.

Commitments from the Keynote Speaker

Dr. Fred Muhumuza, as the keynote speaker, emphasized the need for a holistic social protection system and called for greater inter-ministerial collaboration. He advocated for policies that strengthen economic resilience and inclusivity, enabling Uganda's most vulnerable to participate fully in economic and social development.



Commitment from the Minister of Gender, Labour, and Social Development

Hon. Betty Amongi, in her address, committed to expanding social protection initiatives, including the universal health insurance scheme and enhancing the Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment (SAGE).

She emphasized aligning social protection policies with the goals of NDP IV to support sustainable development and resilience.



Caption; Dr Ibrahim Kasirye, the Director Research at the Economic Policy Research Centre, Makerere, moderating a multi-stakeholder panel discussion

Five Key Outcomes from the Panel Discussion:

Increased Funding and Coverage - Panelists highlighted the need for expanded funding and coverage of social protection, especially for informal sector workers.

Enhanced Stakeholder Coordination - Emphasis was placed on improving coordination between ministries and agencies to avoid redundancy and increase program efficiency.

Data Integration for Targeting - The importance of integrating data systems across sectors was discussed to enhance targeting and service delivery.

Promoting Inclusivity - There was a call to address accessibility challenges and ensure all social protection initiatives are inclusive, especially for disabled and elderly populations.

Strengthening Legislative Support - Participants discussed the need for stronger legislative frameworks to support social protection policies sustainably.

Presentation on the Status of Social Protection in Kenya:

Jane Muyanga Kitili, the Director of the National Social Protection Secretariat, Kenya, shared Kenya's approach to social protection financing, where over 90% of initiatives are government-funded. She emphasized Kenya's successful implementation of cash transfer programmes and highlighted the value of a lifecycle approach in addressing poverty and vulnerability.

Key Documents Launched:

State of Social Protection Report - An annual report assessing Uganda 's progress in social protection.

Social Protection Investment Case - A document demonstrating the economic benefits of investing in social protection.

National Social Protection Strategy - A strategic roadmap for implementing and expanding social protection initiatives in Uganda.

Remarks by Hon Flavia Kabahenda Rwabuhoro.

The Chairperson of the Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Social Protection (UPFSP) expresses appreciation for the dedication shown by all stakeholders in advancing social protection in Uganda. The second Social Protection Month highlights both our achievements and ongoing efforts to build a stronger, more inclusive social protection system.

The Chairperson reiterated the collective mission aligned with Uganda' s Vision 2040, emphasizing that social protection is fundamental to human capital development and economic resilience. This commitment goes beyond charity; it is about ensuring the dignity and rights of all Ugandans.

Commitments from the Chairerson of UPFSP

1. Strengthening Advocacy: UPFSP will continue its relentless advocacy to maintain social protection as a priority in Uganda's national agenda.
2. Enhancing Collaboration: The Forum will foster partnerships among policymakers, civil society, and development partners to expand and improve social protection programs.
3. Expanding Program Reach: Efforts to scale up initiatives like the Senior Citizens Grant and child- and gender-focused programs will continue, aiming to uplift vulnerable groups and reduce poverty.
4. Aligning with National Goals: UPFSP remains dedicated to the vision set forth in Vision 2040 and National Development Plan III,

seeing social protection as an essential investment in Uganda's future prosperity

Way Forward

The dialogue and indeed the Social Protection Month 2024 concluded with a strong consensus on building a shock-responsive, inclusive social protection system in Uganda. This included commitments to:

- Develop a socioeconomic register for targeted support.
- Secure increased budget allocations for social protection.
- Foster inter-ministerial coordination.
- Advocate for policies that sustain long-term investment in social protection.

Quotable Quotes

"Our common objective must be to ensure that those most at risk gain access to the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in the social, economic and political life," **Hon Betty Amongi, Minister for Gender, Labour and Economic Development.**

"Any civilised society must care for its vulnerable. Not only because it is morally right to do, but because the cost of not doing so is greater for our society," **Professor Pamela Mbabazi, Chairperson, National Planning Authority.**

"While we want to increase the scope and make interventions broaders and thicker, we must spead the concept to address all the root causes that defune social protection. We need to be practical

and realistic. For instance, what does sh25,000 (given to older persons monthly) do?" **Dr Fred Muhumuza, Senior Lecturer at Makerere University Business School and Director of the MUBS Economic Forum.**

"Social Protection in Africa is more or less a political issue that must have the political good will of the people at the top. We need to lobby them to understand why we need social protection. Let us not talk about Social Protection during campaign period. Social Protection should be an everyday conversation," J**ane Muyanga Kitili, Director, National Social Protection Secretariat, Kenya**

"Programmes such as PDM are an opportunity for the contributory social security. If the poor and vulnerable are pushed into the money economy, they should be able to now contribute to their own social security. That is an opportunity," **Stephen Kasaija, Head, Expanding Social Protection Programme, MGLSD**

"We need to start looking at the connectivity between social assistance and social insurance. There are underlying building blocks like the intra and inter-miniisterial coordination. Additionally we need to leverage on the principle of partnerships considering that there are a number of stakeholders contributing to social protection," **Mwenya Kapasa, Social Protection Technical Officer, ILO**

"Fiscal Space as a number of speakers have highlighted remain a challenge. We are exploring areas of innovative financing such as diaspora bonds. We need innovative ways of designing these bonds with money targeted towards social protection," **Moses Sonko,**

Principal Economist, Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development

By Gloria Nakajubi, Advocacy and Communication Lead and Joshua Marvin Onyang, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Lead

The Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Social Protection (UPFSP)