THE UGANDA PARLIAMENTARY FORUM ON SOCIAL PROTECTION

2023

POLICY BRIEF

Community Baraza: Assessing Effectiveness of Social Protection Interventions and Enhancing Accountability in West Nile (Lobule Sub-County, Koboko and Bileafe Sub-County, Terego)

1.0 Introduction:

The efficiency of public service delivery in Uganda has been hindered by inadequate monitoring systems and fragile accountability structures, especially regarding beneficiary accountability to service providers. It is on this premise that the Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Social Protection undertook a community-based monitoring and accountability strategy known as community baraza to assess the effectiveness of social protection interventions and enhance Accountability structures in West Nile with Koboko and Terego being the pilots of this initiative.

These public engagement gatherings, conducted at sub-county levels serve as platforms for information exchange among stakeholders, including policy makers, public servants, members of parliament and service beneficiaries. The "Community Baraza: Assessing Effectiveness of Social Protection Interventions and Enhancing Accountability in West Nile" offererd a space for citizens to engage with policy makers, empowering them to demand accountability and transparent resource utilization. This approach extends to social protection interventions, fostering transparency and accountability among all stakeholders. The Community Baraza project in West Nile evaluated intervention effectiveness, identifies barriers to access, and enhanced accountability through open discussions involving community members, government officials, experts, members of parliament and other stakeholders.

1.1 Objectives:

The Community Baraza initiative in Koboko and Terego Districts pursued the following objectives:

1. **Evaluate Effectiveness:** The initiative aimed to assess the efficacy of social protection interventions targeted at vulnerable groups in the West Nile region.
2. **Identify Barriers:** It sought to identify and address barriers that hinder the access to social protection services and essential social amenities.

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3. **Enhance Accountability:** The initiative aimed to promote transparency and accountability in the implementation of social protection programs.
4. **Boost Participation:** By encouraging active participation and engagement, the Community Baraza aimed to elevate community members' involvement in the process.
5. **Document Best Practices:** The initiative intended to document emerging lessons, success stories, and best practices from various social protection programs.

1.2 Methodology

The community baraza process started with the training of district resource persons and this involved interactive sessions, expert presentations, group discussions plenary sessions and a mock baraza

The findings from the mapping exercise conducted in eight refugee hosting districts served as the foundation for discussions.

Subject matter experts provided insights into social protection interventions, accountability mechanisms, and best practices across three programmes that is Child Sensitive Social Protection Programme, DRDIP and the Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment

Participants engaged in smaller group discussions focusing on the three selected programmes with the specific themes discussed on social protection delivery, such as access to pay

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points, value of cash transfers, frequency of payments, and complaints mechanisms.

Duty bearers had the opportunity to respond to concerns raised by community members.

Feedback was captured which will be used to inform advocacy at National level and to align some of the challenges at the district level.

1.3 Effective Facilitation preparations

The forum held a pre-training of District Resource Persons which played a critical role in maximizing the value of the Community Baraza. This prepared facilitators to understand the event's goals, ensure cohesive approaches, and enable effective discussions. The Community Baraza hence effectively facilitated engagement between various stakeholders including community members, government officials, members of parliament, and partner organizations. This fostered a conducive environment for open discussions and collaboration, promoting transparency and accountability.

2.0 Positive Programme Impacts:

2.1 Senior Citizens Grant

Alleviation of Poverty: The grant has significantly lifted elderly citizens out of poverty, providing them with a consistent source of income.

Dignity Restoration: Beneficiaries experience restored dignity and independence, enabling them to contribute to their families and communities.

Educational Support: The grant has allowed beneficiaries to support their grandchildren's education, improving the prospects of younger generations and inevitably supporting in the human capital development of the country.

Livelihood Improvement: The funds have been invested in farming, livestock, and other income-generating activities, leading to improved household income.

Healthcare Access: Enhanced financial stability allows beneficiaries to access necessary healthcare services, improving their overall well-being.

2.2 Child Sensitive Social Protection Programme:

Reduced Child Illness: The programme has led to a decrease in child illnesses among beneficiary families, improving child health.

Knowledge Transfer: Mothers share sensitization information with non-beneficiary mothers, promoting valuable knowledge transfer in communities.

Improved Child Well-being: The programme contributes to improved overall physical health and well-being of children in beneficiary families.

2.3 Development Response to Displacement Impact Project:

Employment Opportunities: The Labour-Intensive Public Works approach has created employment opportunities for under employed individuals improving livelihoods.

Infrastructure Development: The project contributes to the development of essential infrastructure, benefiting both displaced populations and host communities.

Poverty Alleviation: By providing employment and income-generating opportunities, the project helps alleviate poverty and enhance economic stability.

3.0 Programme Challenges:

3.1 Senior Citizens Grant

Distance to Pay Points: Beneficiaries face difficulties accessing grants due to the distance to pay points considering their frailty

Age Eligibility: Some older individuals became ineligible for the grant due to increased age requirements from 65years to 80years.

Grant Value Adequacy: The grant value has since depreciated due to inflation and is now perceived as insufficient to cover essential expenses adequately.

Administrative Complexities: Administrative hurdles hinder timely fund disbursement and enrollment of alternative recipients.

3.2 Child Sensitive Social Protection Programme:

Domestic Violence: Disputes arise over grant use, leading to instances of domestic violence among beneficiary families. Some of the men have not conceptualized the use of the grant and therefore demand that they be given their share for their own personal use.

Communication and Coordination: Poor communication regarding distribution dates and locations has created challenges for beneficiaries and yet for many of them that don't have registered bank accounts, upon missing payment, they are not reimbursed.

Limited Coverage for Twins: The programme's focus on one child per beneficiary reduces support for mothers with more than one child at birth.

Corruption Claims: Allegations of corruption in beneficiary registration undermine programme integrity. Some of the beneficiaries claimed that the person that forwarded them for enrollment were asking for kickbacks from the grant.

3.3 Development Response to Displacement Impact Project:

Untimely Delivery of Supplies: Supplies are sometimes

delivered during off-seasons, affecting the effectiveness of initiatives.

Bureaucratic Hurdles: Bureaucratic processes cause delays in supply delivery and resource disbursement.

Inadequate Training: Beneficiaries lack comprehensive knowledge for successful project implementation. Some beneficiaries asserted that they did not receive adequate training before the projects started.

High Bank Charges: High transaction fees during fund withdrawals reduce the actual amount received by beneficiaries.

4.0 Community Recommendations:

4.1 Senior Citizens Grant:

Vetting Committees: Establish vetting committees at the sub-county level to ensure accurate assessment and eligibility verification.

Budget Allocation: Increase the budget allocation towards the senior citizens grant to accommodate more beneficiaries.

Grant Value Increment: Advocate for policy makers to review and potentially increase the grant value to better match beneficiaries' needs and also factor in inflation

Timely Reporting of Deaths: Implement mechanisms for timely reporting of death cases to prevent delays in reallocating grants.

Accessibility of Pay Points: Create additional pay points or introduce mobile payment solutions to reduce the burden on frail beneficiaries.

4.2 Child Sensitive Social Protection Programme:

Continuous Sensitization for Husbands: Conduct ongoing sensitization to educate husbands about programme benefits.

Mindset Change Initiatives: Allocate resources for mindset change initiatives to ensure programme success.

4.3 Development Response to Displacement Impact Project:

Supply Management Enhancement: Collaborate with suppliers for timely delivery, and establish proactive tracking mechanisms.

Streamlining Administrative Processes: Simplify bureaucratic procedures and establish responsive communication channels.

Comprehensive Training: Enhance training modules with practical sessions and hands-on experience.

Minimizing Bank Charges: Negotiate lower transaction fees and explore digital payment options.

4.4 Other Key Asks

i. There is need to streamline social protection in all development programmes.

ii. There is need to expedite the National Health Insurance Scheme Bill. This will reduce the high out-of-pocket health expenditure that leaves many households at risk of poverty or pushes them deeper into poverty.

iii. There is need for sustainable social protection programming. The 'projectisation' of social protection is a disservice to system building.

5.0 Outcomes and Implications:

Enhanced Stakeholder Engagement:

Increased participation and active engagement of community members, district leadership, members of parliament, government officials, and other stakeholders in discussions related to social protection interventions.

Identified Challenges Addressed:

Identification and comprehensive discussion of challenges hindering the effectiveness and reach of social protection interventions, leading to potential solutions and actionable recommendations.

Promoted Social Accountability:

Raised awareness and understanding among community members and stakeholders about the significance of social accountability, leading to increased demands for transparency and improved service delivery.

Evidence-Based Decision-Making:

Compilation of data-driven insights and feedback from beneficiaries, allowing for evidence-based decision-making in refining existing social protection programmes.

Gaps in Coverage Highlighted:

Clear identification of gaps in the coverage of social protection interventions, leading to a more targeted and inclusive approach to reaching vulnerable groups.

Improved Policy Alignment:

Enhanced alignment of social protection policies with community needs and expectations, ensuring that interventions are better tailored to local contexts.

Empowered Community Facilitators:

Strengthened capacity of community facilitators through the pre-training session, enabling them to effectively lead discussions, address queries, and ensure the baraza's success.

Government Awareness and Responsiveness:

Improved awareness among district officials and

policymakers about community concerns, leading to more responsive policy decisions and actions.

Transparent Dialogue:

Establishment of an open dialogue platform between community members and duty bearers, fostering transparency, mutual understanding, and trust.

Enhanced Local Oversight:

Strengthened local capacity for monitoring, evaluation, and oversight through orientation of community facilitators on advocacy and accountability structures.

Actionable Recommendations:

Formulation of practical recommendations based on discussions, which can guide policy adjustments and the implementation of social protection interventions.

Increased Collaboration:

Strengthened collaboration among various stakeholders, government agencies, NIRA, and local leadership, to collectively address social protection challenges.

Sustained Awareness:

Long-term awareness among participants about the importance of social protection and their role in holding service providers accountable.

Positive Impact on Social Protection:

Anticipated improvements on the effectiveness, coverage, and impact of social protection programmes based on insights gained from community input.

The Community Baraza delivered impactful outcomes, including amplified stakeholder engagement, identification of challenges, bolstered social accountability, data-driven decision-making, improved policy alignment, and empowered community facilitators. These outcomes are poised to enhance the efficiency and accountability of social protection programmes, ultimately leading to improved well-being and livelihoods for vulnerable groups.

6.0 Programmatic recommendations

i. Administrative processes should be streamlined to prevent delays, ensuring efficiency in programme delivery.

ii. An increased budget allocation for social protection programmes is crucial to accommodate a broader range of beneficiaries.

iii. Grant values should be enhanced to align better with the needs of the beneficiaries.

iv. The establishment of vetting committees can ensure accurate assessment and eligibility verification, ensuring the right people benefit from these programmes

v. Continuous sensitization efforts are essential for beneficiaries and partners to minimize disputes and foster a supportive environment for programme success.

vi. Simplifying bank account opening requirements and exploring digital payment options can enhance beneficiaries' access to funds.

vii. Improving supply management through timely deliveries and proactive tracking can prevent disruptions in project execution.

viii. Enhanced training modules will equip beneficiaries with comprehensive skills and knowledge, boosting the impact of interventions.

ix. By implementing these recommendations, the programmes can address their respective challenges and further amplify their positive impacts on beneficiaries and communities

6.1 Policy Implications:

i. **Policy Alignment:** Policies should be aligned with community needs, integrating local perspectives and ensuring programme relevance.

ii. **Engagement Enhancement:** Continuous engagement among policymakers, government officials, and community members is crucial for transparent service delivery and accountability.

iii. **Continuous Sensitization:** Initiating continuous sensitization initiatives can reshape mindsets and minimize disputes, creating a conducive environment for programme successes.

iv. **Administrative Efficiency:** Simplifying bureaucratic processes is paramount to ensuring prompt access to social protection services and benefits.

v. **Resource Allocation:** Adequate budget allocation and euitable resource distribution are fundamental to expanding programme reach and impact.

7.0 Conclusion

The triumph of the "Community Baraza: Assessing Effectiveness of Social Protection Interventions and Enhancing Accountability in West Nile" initiative underscores the paramount importance of community involvement, transparency, and accountability in the realm of social protection interventions. This policy brief has elucidated the outcomes and recommendations arising from this initiative, providing a comprehensive blueprint for enhancing programme efficiency, uplifting vulnerable groups, and fostering holistic development across the West Nile region.