

## Stakeholders Demand Unified Financing for Uganda' Social Protection Agenda



(L-R) Finance Ministry's Senior Economist Janat Nankya, ISER ED Angella Nabwowe Kasule and MP Elect Rukiga County during the High-level meeting on Child and Social Protection financing, on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2026. Source (CSBAG)

**The core programmes already in place, including the Special Enterprise Grant for Older Persons (SEGOP) targeting citizens aged 60 to 79, Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP), including the USD 217 million World Bank-funded GROW Project, but further investment is needed, Emmanuel Onene noted.**

As Uganda navigates FY2026/2027 budget planning, Civil Society, government technocrats, and newly elected legislators have issued a unified call: treat social protection as a strategic investment, not a charitable expense.

During a high-level meeting on Child and Social Protection Financing, stakeholders dissected systemic gaps—from fragmented budgeting to heavy donor dependence—and laid out a stark warning: without political will and predictable financing, **Vision 2040** remains out of reach for millions of vulnerable children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Julius Mukunda, Executive Director of the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG), set the tone. He declared that social protection is a human right. Mr. Mukunda stressed that child protection financing must be anchored in clear parameters, strong oversight, and alignment with the national budget cycle.

He emphasized that for Uganda, delivering on commitments requires defined actions, measurable indicators, and accountable systems that track progress and impact for children and families. He further noted that strengthened collaboration between Parliament and Civil Society Organizations is essential to champion and sustain child-focused financing reforms, adding that effective partnerships between Parliament and CSOs are fundamental to strengthening accountability, inclusiveness, and service delivery systems.

Mr. Emmanuel Onene, representing the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD), presented Uganda's current social protection architecture. He reminded participants that vulnerability follows a lifecycle. He stated that from childhood to old age, social protection systems must work for everyone by empowering families to withstand shocks and build resilient livelihoods throughout their life cycle.

Mr. Onene outlined Uganda's two-pillar system comprising social security, which includes direct income support and social insurance, as well as social care and support services.

He listed core programmes already in place, including the Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment (SAGE) providing **UGX 25,000** per month for citizens aged **80** and above, the National Special Grant for Persons with Disabilities, the Special Enterprise Grant for Older Persons (SEGOP) targeting citizens aged **60 to 79**, the Youth Livelihood Programme, the Youth Venture Capital Fund, and the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP), including the **USD 217 million** World Bank-funded GROW Project.

However, he acknowledged that further investment is critical. He stated that further investment in social protection is needed to foster a more inclusive and faster socio-economic transformation in line with Vision 2040.

However, what is missing is political will and predictable financing. He urged stakeholders to improve implementation.

Newly elected legislators did not hold back. Hon. Makmot Edward, Agago County Member of Parliament, emphasized targeted programming. He stated that sustained investment, coordination, and targeted programs are key to addressing the needs of children with disabilities. He added that supporting street children must tackle root causes like family instability and socio-economic vulnerability, not just symptoms.

Hon. Ongiertho Emmanuel Jor, also a Member of Parliament, called for a deeper understanding of financing and policy issues, noting that the panel which included Janat Nankya, Senior Economist at MoFPED, Angella Kasule Nabwowe, Executive Director of ISER Uganda, and MP-elect Patrick Katabazi of Rukiga County, represented the cross-sectoral collaboration required.

ISER Executive Director Angella Kasule Nabwowe noted that fragmented financing and coordination constraints, absorption capacity and implementation bottlenecks, low prioritization of social protection, which is still viewed as consumptive rather than productive, as well as heavy donor dependence and limited private sector role have affected Social Protection Financing for Uganda, which has the policies, systems, and programmes.

MP-elect Rukiga County Patrick Katabazi Kiconco declared that the current approach to social protection financing in the National Budget is disintegrated, fragmented, and reactive. He argued that Uganda cannot have SAGE under the Gender Ministry, Youth Livelihood under Trade, and PWD grants under Local Government while still expecting vulnerable Ugandans to be protected. He called for a comprehensive, unified financing framework for social protection, demanding one budget line, one vision, and one accountable system.

Ms. Janat Nankya, Senior Economist from the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, acknowledged the gaps but reaffirmed the Ministry's commitment. She stated that social protection is not a cost to the economy but a strategic investment in Uganda's greatest asset: its children and future workforce. She confirmed that MoFPED is committed to ring-fencing resources for child and social protection to drive inclusive growth.

She also addressed the awareness deficit, noting that we cannot finance what we do not prioritize, and we cannot prioritize what we do not understand. She stressed that raising awareness across all sectors, from Parliament to the household, is the first step toward sustainable social protection financing.

However, Ms. Nankya raised a red flag on efficiency, observing that with only **UGX 17 billion** in administrative costs, this is costly. She also called for a national social registry to improve targeting, coordination, and value for money.

The meeting concluded with a clear set of parliamentary and advocacy actions, drawn from the April 2026 presentation. Stakeholders agreed to align advocacy priorities for FY2027/2028 to key financing gaps, ring-fence funding for social protection as a government commitment, and deepen engagement between MoFPED and the Budget Committee of Parliament on identified funding gaps.

Social protection is not a cost. It is the down payment on Uganda's future.