

## CONCEPT NOTE

### TOWARDS COMPREHENSIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION IN UGANDA

*Presented on June 11, 2021 by UNICEF Uganda to the Embassy of Belgium in Uganda for your consideration*

#### BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Following decades of progress on poverty reduction, the global pandemic has effectively reversed socio-economic gains for people around the world, and millions are now being pulled into poverty, with as many as 150 million people falling into extreme poverty.<sup>1</sup> With the global recession and a disproportionate impact across vulnerable groups, the pandemic has exacerbated existing structural inequities, with devastating impacts on marginalized groups, including women, children, and people with disabilities, among others.

In Uganda, progress to improve monetary poverty had been achieved prior to COVID-19 with a reduction from 56 per cent of Uganda's children suffering from multiple deprivations across health, education and social protection in 1992 to 21 per cent in 2017.<sup>2</sup> Despite this success, further work is needed to improve conditions for children. Studies show that the pandemic is projected to reverse the gains made, with economic contractions further reducing expected investments in human capital development.<sup>3</sup>

Adolescent girls in particular experience some of the greatest vulnerabilities, with teenage pregnancy contributing to school dropout and reducing future income generating opportunities. In Uganda, 1 in 4 girls aged 15-19 have already begun childbearing,<sup>4</sup> and studies indicate that the pandemic has further exacerbated deprivations, with unique challenges emerging in urban environments. One of the most effective ways to address these vulnerabilities is through social protection interventions targeting the most vulnerable.

The global social protection response to the pandemic has been unprecedented, with more than 200 countries engaging in some form of response to address income losses and vulnerabilities, and a doubling of cash transfer coverage. The planned and actual horizontal expansion in coverage by 217 per cent relative to pre-pandemic levels covers 17 per cent of the world's population, or 1.3 billion people.<sup>5</sup> Yet concerns are also being raised about the institutionalization and sustainability of these social protection interventions.

In Uganda, despite the high levels of poverty, only 2.9 per cent of the population was covered by at least one social protection benefit prior to the pandemic, and this is well below the African average of 17.8 per cent. While the right to social protection for all Ugandans is set out in the 1995 Constitution and the government has articulated an ambitious vision for the social

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/10/07/covid-19-to-add-as-many-as-150-million-extreme-poor-by-2021>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/uganda/reports/situation-analysis-children-uganda-2019>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/uganda/publication/uganda-economic-update-uganda-can-benefit-from-the-demographic-dividend-by-investing-more-in-education-health#:~:text=The%20World%20Bank%20projects%20a,structural%20transformation%20in%20recent%20years.>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/uganda/reports/situation-analysis-children-uganda-2019>

<sup>5</sup> <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/737761605775837011/pdf/Where-is-the-Money-Coming-From-Ten-Stylized-Facts-on-Financing-Social-Protection-Responses-to-COVID-19.pdf>

protection sector (with commitments to expand the coverage of social assistance to 50 per cent of the vulnerable population by 2030), progress has been slow.

Given Uganda's vulnerability to the impact of shocks to income (covariate shocks), there is a need to strengthen social protection systems and programmes, prioritize the most vulnerable groups, and support the government to advocate for greater fiscal allocations to the social sector. To that end, UNICEF Uganda has been working with the Government of Uganda to strengthen its social protection system and ensure comprehensive coverage, including for the most vulnerable groups. Notably, the approval of Uganda's National Social Protection Policy (2015) was a pivotal moment in establishing that vision, as it creates a unified policy framework for a comprehensive social protection system along the two pillars of social security and social care and support services. The comprehensive ambition has been outlined in the country's National Development Plans,<sup>6</sup> as well as Uganda's Vision 2040,<sup>7</sup> and is critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>8</sup>

## TOWARDS COMPREHENSIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION

International evidence on cash transfer interventions has demonstrated effectiveness in increasing positive outcomes for recipients, such as through improvements in household and food expenditures, use of health facilities, and adult labour force participation, as well as a reduction in negative outcomes, such as child labour and physical abuse.<sup>9</sup> The proposed intervention aims to build momentum for a more comprehensive social protection system that expands the national portfolio of interventions beyond the limited existing offer of the Senior Citizen's Grant and Labour-Intensive Public Works Programmes to target a uniquely vulnerable population: adolescent girls living in urban areas.

In Uganda, adolescent girls living in urban areas often disproportionately bear the burden of poverty, lack access to social services and are not able to take advantage of the opportunities associated with living in urban settings, and are therefore also more likely to face exploitation, abuse and exclusion. By 2040, over 20 million Ugandans will reside in urban areas, with the highest proportion being children and young people. To support the most vulnerable communities, in November 2019, the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) and UNICEF launched the GirlsEmpoweringGirls urban social protection programme for adolescent girls in Kampala to support their safe transition to adulthood.



The programme aims to ensure the greater inclusion and protection of adolescent girls through strengthened socio-economic outcomes and prospects, and it does so by supporting in-school and out-of-school adolescent girls living in Kampala through several key channels: empowering adolescent girls through a network of Peer Mentors that provide personalized individual and group mentoring; engaging girls through education, training and referrals to support services; and enabling them to pursue better opportunities for their future through a small cash transfer provided via a designated caregiver.

GirlsEmpoweringGirls is the first programme providing social protection to adolescent girls in Uganda, and it represents an important milestone in the government's efforts to achieve

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.npa.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/NDPIII-Finale\\_Compressed.pdf](http://www.npa.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/NDPIII-Finale_Compressed.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.npa.go.ug/uganda-vision-2040/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/Uganda-UNSDCF-2021-2025.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://odi.org/en/publications/cash-transfers-what-does-the-evidence-say-a-rigorous-review-of-impacts-and-the-role-of-design-and-implementation-features/>

comprehensive social protection. It is aligned with the Government of Uganda's Vision 2040, National Development Plan, and National Social Protection Policy, and is supported by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. While it is designed to provide direct support to adolescent girls, it also aims to pave the way for scaling up government-led child-sensitive social protection efforts throughout the country by generating results and evidence, strengthening capacities among policymakers, and generate feedback loops to enhance government systems and influence decision making on social protection.

Through a long-term commitment to participants (provision of support for four years during a critical period of adolescence when they are most at risk), the programme seeks to:

- Empower adolescent girls with skills, strengthen social support networks, improve self-esteem, improve mental wellbeing, and improve their outlook on life and the future;
- Engage adolescent girls to make informed decisions about access and utilisation of age- and gender-sensitive health, protection, education and training services;
- Enable adolescent girls and their households to pursue opportunities for their future;
- Strengthen systems and services for adolescent girls in Kampala.

While there is significant evidence on the effectiveness of cash transfers, there are promising studies of more wide-ranging, services-oriented programming across a range of dimensions (education, health, gender, protection, livelihoods, etc.), known as “cash plus” interventions, which have led to more sustainable and durable impact on beneficiaries. Given the complex political environment for cash transfer programmes in Uganda, and following extensive consultations with government and non-government stakeholders to identify the context-specific considerations, KCCA adopted a “cash plus” design approach for the GirlsEmpoweringGirls programme,

## PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

The proposed opportunity between UNICEF and the Embassy of Belgium builds on a two-year investment by UNICEF into establishing the foundation for Uganda's first-ever urban social protection programme for adolescent girls through a partnership with KCCA, and proposes to strengthen and support that engagement through from November 1, 2021 through December 31, 2025, through systems strengthening interventions and the provision of social protection to vulnerable in-school and out-of-school girls in Kampala, through investments in two pillars:

- Systems Strengthening and Coordination: Providing technical and financial support in the implementation of the National Social Protection Policy, including through the generation of evidence, and strengthening the humanitarian-development continuum;
- Comprehensive Social Protection: Supporting the Government of Uganda to implement gender-responsive and child-sensitive social protection.

This programme is designed to contribute to the following UNICEF outcome: By 2025 child sensitive evidence and analysis informs more effective and efficient planning, budgeting and implementation of programmes for reducing child deprivation, inequities and gender inequalities, especially for the most vulnerable and marginalised children and adolescents. More specifically, by integrating a systems strengthening approach (Pillar 1) with a service delivery design (Pillar 2), the proposed intervention will strengthen the foundation for social protection and cash transfers in Uganda towards achieving greater sustainability. By building capacity within government and local implementing partners and ensuring the critical delivery of services, the programme aims to directly support vulnerable in-school and out-of-school adolescent girls as

they transition safely to adulthood, whilst also building the systems necessary to harness the demographic dividend and achieve comprehensive social protection for the most vulnerable.

### ***Pillar 1: Systems Strengthening and Coordination***

As social protection is still developing in Uganda and requires strong leadership from the government, the first pillar focuses on UNICEF's key comparative advantage in systems strengthening, partnership with government, coordination among the United Nations organizations and other development partners, as well as engagement with the private sector. It capitalizes on existing platforms and systems. The support from the Embassy of Belgium will be leveraged to strengthen KCCA's systems and coordination to ensure strong leadership of the programme and effective positioning within government systems. This includes coordination with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, and stronger alignment through the integration of GirlsEmpoweringGirls into the National Single Registry, launched in February 2021.

Through this support, KCCA's Directorate of Gender, Community Services and Production (GCP), will coordinate and implement the GirlsEmpoweringGirls programme at three levels, namely the central, division and parish levels. At the central level, the programme is supervised by the Director and Deputy Director of GCP, who receives full-time support from the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Specialist (whose salary would be funded through this grant), and part-time support from the central level Education and Probation Focal Persons, the Information Technology (IT) and Finance Focal Persons, as well as occasional support from other staff at KCCA. At the division level, the programme is supported primarily by KCCA Probation Officers and headteachers at selected schools, and with occasional support from KCCA Education Officers.

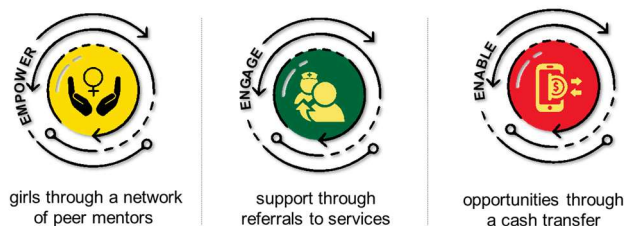
At the parish level, the programme is implemented by a network of Lead Mentors and Peer Mentors, who are directly overseen by two civil society partners: Trailblazers Mentoring Foundation (TMF), responsible for supporting in-school girls (ISG), and the Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL), responsible for supporting the out-of-school girls (OOSGs). The cash transfers are distributed to the girls' primary caregivers and monitored closely to see how the funds have been used. UNICEF provides technical assistance and support to the programme, and coordinates evidence generation and linkages through the humanitarian-development nexus. These parish-level activities are encompassed under the second programme pillar.

Specific activities included in this pillar include: Coordination with government stakeholders (including Ministries of Gender and Finance); Advocacy with key stakeholders, including development partners through dissemination of results and synergies (including the integration of the programme into the National Single Registry database); Coordination and monitoring activities led by KCCA, including weekly management and bi-weekly partner meetings, as well as field-level spot checks and implementation support; Data analysis for agile decision-making processes; Systems strengthening through regular monitoring, feedback loops to improve government-provided services, grievance redress mechanisms, and programmatic design improvements; Community sensitization and coordination for current and new cohort; Identification, enrolment and onboarding of second cohort of adolescent girls.

## Pillar 2: Comprehensive Social Protection

Given the complex intersection of age, gender and geography, the GirlsEmpoweringGirls programme was designed to support vulnerable adolescent girls during a precarious period when they are more likely to drop out of school, experience pregnancy, and suffer from violence and abuse. The programme was therefore designed as a **four-year intervention**, supporting **in-school girls** as they transition from Primary 6 to Secondary 2 in Universal Primary Education schools, as well as vulnerable **out-of-school girls** between the ages of 11-15 residing in parishes with high levels of multidimensional poverty and living in the catchment areas of the schools selected for the in-school girls' cohort.

Following an extensive period of consultations, design, community sensitization and coordination, and identification of participants, KCCA, UNICEF and implementing partners began supporting the first cohort of in-school and out-of-school vulnerable adolescent girls in January 2020 across 15 schools (in-school girls) and 11 parishes (out-of-school girls) in all five divisions of Kampala. Participants were selected using a geographical-categorical targeting approach by selecting the prioritized schools based on high dropout rates and parishes through an analysis of multidimensional child and household poverty, as well as household vulnerabilities. For the in-school girls, a key objective is to keep girls in school and to support their transition from primary to secondary school. For the out-of-school girls, the focus is on addressing vulnerabilities the girls face and on supporting their return to school or to prepare them to generate future livelihood opportunities in the event that they are unable to re-enrol. This first cohort of participants is comprised of 1,400 adolescent girls, who receive support across the three programmatic pillars.



The first pillar is the mentoring module, provided through a network of Peer Mentors (one mentor supports approximately five girls), overseen by Lead Mentors (each one oversees approximately ten Peer Mentors). Under the mentor module pillar, the adolescent girls interact with their Peer Mentor during one-on-one mentor sessions, digital contact moments and group mentor sessions. Through the mentoring pillar, a mentoring relationship is established and maintained.

The second pillar is the referral to services, which aims to link the girls to support from external sources and to inform them of services at health facilities, schools, civil society organisations, and similar and to encourage the uptake of those services. This is a critical pillar as it ensures linkages into existing systems scaffolding and generates feedback loops into government systems, and also because adolescent girls are both less likely to be aware of services available to them and also to take up those critical services.<sup>10</sup>

The third pillar is the cash transfer, which aims to support programme participation, the uptake of services (including education), and otherwise enable positive outcomes for the long-term future of the girl. The cash is transferred via mobile money to the selected primary caregiver of the girls in three disbursements per year, which are aligned with the school year and its trimesters. Each transfer is UGX 160,000 (US\$45) representing UGX 40,000 per month, with the exception of girls who have successfully transitioned to secondary school (their cash

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/uganda/reports/situation-analysis-children-uganda-2019>



transfer amount will increase to UGX 60,000 per month for a total of US\$68). This amount will not change over the years (including to factor in for inflation or changes in mobile money fees), as international experience with cash transfers indicates that varying cash transfer amounts can lead to confusion and fear of fraud among recipients. KCCA also leads community mobilization and engagement with local leadership to ensure broad awareness of the programme and its targeting criteria for public transparency.

Finally, the programme includes a strong monitoring and evaluation pillar to facilitate data-driven decision-making and to ensure that the programme's results and impact are measured. Data will be collected using various channels, including the mentors, grievance redress mechanisms, administrative data, surveys, focus groups, spot checks, and others. Furthermore, efforts to further include the programme into public financing structures are ongoing such as to ensure sustainability and facilitate future scale-ups.

The proposed intervention would benefit a total of 2,900 adolescent girls, providing support to the current cohort of 1,400 girls through December 2023, and engaging a second cohort of in-school and out-of-school girls from January 2022 through December 2025. The second cohort will be selected using lessons learned from the first cohort, and to further prioritize supporting those living below the poverty line that have been affected by teenage pregnancy, in order to encourage their continued schooling / learning and increase their access to critical services for their development.

As the global pandemic disrupted the lives of so many families and children, this intervention will specifically aim to address the crisis at the nexus of age, gender and geography by elevating the national dialogue on the unique vulnerabilities of adolescent girls living in urban areas. While this intervention focuses on Kampala as a priority district, the lessons learned and evidence will be used to explore opportunities for scale-up in other prioritized districts with high levels of multidimensional child poverty.

Specific activities included in this pillar include: Engagement of local implementing partners who engage, train and supervise the work of Lead and Peer Mentors that provide the mentoring support and service referrals; Provision of mentorship and service referrals to the girls, as well as engagements with caregivers; Support for administrative data collection on a monthly basis to track the challenges faced by the girls and ensure follow-up and service provision; Community-level engagement by the local partners through capacity building and sensitization of school leaders and teachers, local leaders, and community members (including boy champions); Delivery of direct cash transfers to girls through their caregivers (including associated costs for the financial transfers); Follow-up with girls and caregivers on the receipt and use of cash transfers, with an eye to ensure safeguarding of children; Support for measuring results and demonstrating programme effectiveness to support advocacy efforts;

## **BUDGET OVERVIEW**

The proposed implementation period is November 1, 2021 – December 31, 2025, and the total budget request is EUR 4,167,783 for UNICEF to work with the government and key stakeholders towards the achievement of more comprehensive social protection in Uganda. The funding encompasses the provision of technical and financial support in the implementation of the National Social Protection Policy, as well as the implementation of gender-responsive and age-sensitive social protection. This includes the direct provision of mentoring, service referrals and cash transfers to two cohorts of in-school and out-of-school vulnerable girls across all five divisions of Kampala (a total of 2,900 adolescent girls) to ensure their safe transition into

adulthood, while also critically strengthening systems for sustainable impact with the following budget:

Duration of Implementation: November 1, 2021 - December 31, 2025 (50 months)						
Core costs	Budget (EUR)	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
<b>Pillar 1: Systems strengthening and coordination</b>						
Government coordination and linkages to division-level provision of education and probation services, including by M&E Specialist at KCCA	200,000		50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000
Cash Transfer and Participant Data Management and Coordination, with linkages to the National Single Registry	165,000		82,500	82,500		
Community sensitization, identification, enrolment, and onboarding of the second cohort of in-school and out-of-school adolescent girls	50,000	50,000				
<b>Pillar 2: Comprehensive Social Protection // Supporting the Government of Uganda to implement gender-responsive and child-sensitive social protection.</b>						
Gender-responsive and age-sensitive mentoring and referrals to critical services (health, protection, education, and skills training) for in-school adolescent girls, and community engagement	750,000		211,069	221,623	154,784	162,523
Gender-responsive and age-sensitive mentoring and referrals to critical services (health, protection, education, and skills training) for out-of-school adolescent girls, and community engagement	700,000		196,998	206,848	144,465	151,689
Cash Transfers to Vulnerable Adolescent Girls – First Cohort (2021-23)	473,593	104,190	184,701	184,701		
Cash Transfers to Vulnerable Adolescent Girls – Second Cohort (2022-25)	841,942		236,944	248,791	173,759	182,447
Human Resource Capacity <sup>11</sup> (EUR6,554 x 50 months)	327,700	13,108	78,648	78,648	78,648	78,648
Programme Support Costs <sup>12</sup>	350,824	16,730	104,086	107,311	60,166	62,531
Cost Recovery (UNICEF 8%) <sup>13</sup>	308,725	14,722	91,596	94,434	52,946	55,027
<b>Totals per year:</b>		198,751	1,236,543	1,274,857	714,768	742,865
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,167,783</b>					

<sup>11</sup> To provide direct oversight, implementation, monitoring, and reporting of the proposed programme.

<sup>12</sup> This is a standard budget line included in all UNICEF Uganda Country Office concept notes/proposal to all donors. Contribution to office running costs, office stationery and supplies, utilities such as telecommunications, internet, rental costs, support staff costs, monitoring and reporting and programme quality assurance activities.

<sup>13</sup> Cost Recovery ensures that when a partner contributes ear-marked funds to a specific programme or project, the proportional indirect costs of the country office and headquarters are covered. Cost Recovery supports staffing, legal, audit, external communications, and security and is paid directly to UNICEF headquarters to manage. This has been agreed at the HQ level by UNICEF and Belgium.

## APPRECIATION

UNICEF would like to take this opportunity to express its sincere appreciation to the Embassy of Belgium in Uganda for consideration of financial contribution in support of children in Uganda. On behalf of the entire UNICEF Uganda team, we thank you for helping to advance our shared commitments to protecting the rights and improving the well-being of children.

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