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**RESEARCH REPORT CALLS ON GOVERNMENT TO PRIORITISE SOCIAL PROTECTION AND RATIFY THE AU PROTOCOL ON SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL SECURITY**

***Press Statement***

**(Kampala )**

On 25 April 2024, the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER), in collaboration with Research and Action for Income Security (RAISE) released its ground breaking report "[\*The African Protocol on the Rights of Citizens to Social Protection and Social Security: How Does Uganda Measure Up?\*](#)" at Golden Tulip Hotel.

In 2022, the African Union adopted the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Citizens to Social Protection and Social Security, underlining the paramount importance of social protection as a fundamental human right and delineating state obligations.

**Commissioner Mwandenga of the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights** in his foreword to the report noted "I am glad to see ISER take on the formidable task of interrogating Uganda's social protection initiatives against the requirements of the African Union Protocol. I commend the government of Uganda for the efforts it is making to provide social protection to its people."

Launched by the **Hon. Balaam Atenyi, State Minister Children Affairs, Ministry of Gender**, this research is particularly timely, given the current global challenges, including the aftermath of COVID-19, climate change, rising living costs, and various conflicts. "The Ministry has spearheaded various initiatives to expand social protection in Uganda. I reaffirm our commitment to social protection and human rights. I commit on behalf of government to follow up on steps towards effective engagement and consultation for ratification of the Protocol on the rights of citizens to Social Protection and Social Security."

"While Uganda has made progress, especially with the adoption of a National Social Protection Policy, our findings indicate a critical need for further strengthening especially to ensure it is enshrined within the legal framework and well financed." **Allana Kembabazi, Programs Manager at ISER and co-author of the report.** "We need to see a human rights and lifecycle approach to social protection."

“In light with our National Social Protection Policy and National Social Protection Strategy, Government already plans to scale up social protection interventions,” said **Lydia Nabiryo, Ag. Assistant Commissioner for Equity at the Ministry of Gender**, during a panel discussion on the research findings.

“Right now as I talk so many people should be able to get SAGE but cannot because they lack national ID.” **Hon. Peggy Joy Waako, MP for older persons** noted room for improvement with the system. “We are working with NIRA.”

The report found that social protection is underfinanced despite it being key to the dignity and well-being of people. “The social protection grants for older persons have remained fixed at 25,000 USh since the programme started more than a decade ago. When inflation is taken into account, the real current value is actually only equal to 16,500 USh per month, which is very low compared to the cost of living in Uganda as well as compared to similar programmes in other countries.” **Rasmus Schjødt, Program Director RAISE and co-author of the report.**

As a whole, financing for social protection has not exceeded 1% of GDP, below its peer neighbouring countries like Kenya and Rwanda and below what Uganda’s National Social Protection Policy recommends.

“I do believe funding for social protection needs to be increased,” noted **IMF’s Resident Representative, Izabela Karpowicz** speaking on a panel discussing report findings. “Some of these resources are financed by development partners and that funding will not stay forever. We need to think about how to make it sustainable. We should think about how to make sure we are reaching the people.”

The research report finds it is possible to increase financing for social protection by curbing illicit financial flows and implementing progressive tax reforms.

“We do lose revenues that could finance social protection. Doing a cost-benefit analysis of tax exemptions in the country is necessary because that is a big pool we could use to finance social spending,” said **Nona Tamale, Lecturer at Makerere University** reflecting on the report findings. She further noted that Uganda’s rising debt impacts social protection. “The debt service competes with social spending like social protection.”

Prominent figures like Professor Ezra Seruma, Senior Presidential Adviser and former Minister of Finance, last year called on government to finance social protection and even suggested ring fencing some portion of oil revenues to finance it.

Reacting to the ISER and RAISE report findings, **Robert Nkwangu, Executive Director, Uganda National Association of the Deaf** called for stronger social protection for persons with disabilities. “We need a comprehensive approach towards people with disabilities beyond giving out the cash.”



At its last review of its human rights record by the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights, Uganda's social protection record was scrutinised. The African Commission asked the country to ratify the Protocol. The AU Protocol calls for a lifecycle and holistic rights based approach to social protection

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**For further information, please contact [info@iser-uganda.org](mailto:info@iser-uganda.org)**

**About ISER:** The Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER) is a non-profit organization based in Kampala, Uganda. Since its establishment, ISER has been a leading advocate for social and economic rights. Through research, advocacy, strategic litigation and community mobilisation, ISER works towards creating a more inclusive and equitable society that advances social and economic justice for all.

To access the full publication, please visit ISER's website [www.iser-uganda.org](http://www.iser-uganda.org)

**[Research & Action for Income Security](#) (RAISE)** is a Danish NGO focused on ensuring that everybody has an adequate income through decent jobs and social protection.