PRESENTATION BY HON. PETER ANYANG' NYONG'O, EGH, MP, MINISTER FOR MEDICAL SERVICES OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA AT THE 10TH MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (CEPA): NEW YORK, APRIL 5-8, 2011

Social Protection and Governance for Results

Abstract

Social protection consists of policies and programs designed to essentially to reduce poverty and vulnerability of citizens by promoting general social welfare, through diminishing people's exposure to risks, and enhancing their capacity to protect themselves against hazards and interruption or loss of income. In more developed countries, social protection is mainly known in terms of unemployment benefits (such as food stamps in the USA), social security in general, low cost or subsidized housing for the poor and social health insurance. In the less developed countries, social protection coverage is often minimal, covering mainly certain aspects of health, pension schemes and limited workers' protection.

Nonetheless, it is generally accepted that there are five main forms of social protection today:

1. Labor market policies and programs designed to promote employment, the efficient operation of labor markets and the protection of workers;

2. Social insurance programs to cushion the risks associated with unemployment, ill health, disability, work-related injury and old age;

3. Social assistance and welfare service programs for the most vulnerable groups with no other means of adequate support, including single mothers, the homeless, or physically or mentally challenged people;

4. Micro- and area-based schemes to address vulnerability at the community level, including micro-insurance, agricultural insurance, social funds and programs to manage natural disasters;

5. Child protection to ensure the healthy and productive development of children.

It is noted in the end that while history is full of examples of successes and failures in social protection programs, their relevance to the alleviation of poverty, improvement of social welfare and economic growth can hardly be challenged; what remains problematic is why governments fail to socially protect even when they are capable of doing so resource wise. The answer will more likely lie in the alternative interests that governments seek to serve and how these interests can be "undermined" or "deflected" by the use of public resources for social protection.

In many developing societies, leadership—at the national and ministerial levels—can quite often play critical positive roles in promoting and implementing social protection programs. Malawi, a poor country for a long time assumed to be perpetually food dependent, became a net food exporter following the aggressive agricultural and social protection policies under President Mbingu wa Mutharika.

Brazil's Lula da Silva's government initiated social protection programs which have had tremendous positive social welfare outcomes as well as economic growth.[1]

Where leadership is not up to the mark, social protection is quite often not paid much attention and not prioritized in government programs. This may simply be a function of ignorance or of an ideology that assumes that government cannot be responsible for the welfare of individuals however poor. It is assumed that there are specific social welfare functions, such as education and health, which are routinely provided as "public goods" however inadequate and ineffective. These cases require strong local and international pressure on governments to implement MDGs in deeds and not simply by signing international resolutions and conventions.[2]

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[1] See, for example, *Transcript of Statements by Luiz Inacio da Silva, President of Brazil, to the High-Level Meeting for Foreign Investors,* Geneva: 29th January 2003. (www.unctad.org/sections/edm_dir/docs/Lula_statement290104_en.pdf). In this address, President da Silva said, *inter alia,* "Today the most important program of social protection that our country has ever seen is underway. From October 27 to December 27 we included 3.6 million people who are covered by the Family Stipends Program. By the end of my government we intend to reach 11 million families—that means almost 50 million Brazilians who today are in need. But we need much more than that. It is fundamental that we create opportunities and economic options for all our population."

[2] See, for example, R.S.R. Kasim and S. Che Din, *The Relationship between Knowledge Management Practices and Performance of Government Agency in Malaysia,* MANAGEMENT 08, The Eight International Conference on "Knowledge, Culture and Change in Organizations, 5-8 August 2008, Cambridge University, UK.