

CONCEPT NOTE

THE FIRST UTAFITI SERA (RESEARCH-POLICY COMMUNITY) FORUM ON SOCIAL PROTECTION IN KENYA MAY 10, 2016

1. Background

Social protection interventions are a means of mitigating risks and substantially reducing chronic poverty and vulnerability without producing significant distortions or disincentives in a country's economy. As formal social protection programmes in Africa begin to expand, research evidence is emerging on their impact on the poor and vulnerable members of society. Indeed, there is an increasing pool of evidence that social protection interventions in Kenya, both non-contributory and contributory schemes, are helping to reduce extreme poverty. The Government, with support of development partners, has developed the National Social Protection Policy (2011) and the Sesssional Paper on Social Protection (2015) and is implementing several programmes (including cash transfers) that have long-term implications for both the poor and the country more generally. While it is not clear how research evidence may have influenced the policy and programmes on social protection in the country, experience suggests that policy makers, programme implementers and researchers need to work together for an effective social protection system.

Research evidence can influence policy uptake and programme implementation by ensuring the following:

- i. The use of evidence to make decisions on the appropriate social protection instruments and level of investment;

- ii. Programming is informed and shaped by research findings based on local results that are gathered on regular basis or through the monitoring and evaluation systems established as part of the programmes; and
- iii. Forums are held regularly that bring together researchers, implementers and policy makers to deliberate on social protection issues at the national and county levels.

While current social protection programmes have contributed to reducing poverty and vulnerabilities in the country, there are still many challenges regarding the reach, legislation, coordination of different social protection programmes, exit and graduation and financing mechanisms. Research evidence could help identify gaps and proffer policy and programming options for addressing the various challenges.

Experience suggests that turning research evidence into policy action is likely to succeed when dedicated and well thought mechanisms involving a community of practice are developed. As part of PASGR's research-policy engagement processes, *Utafiti Sera* has been developed as an intervention that provides opportunities for new ways of thinking and collaborating to address the challenges that hinder the use of research evidence to inform policy action and programming decisions.

Utafiti Sera represents a community of researchers, implementers and policy actors that work together to ensure that appropriate policy actions and uptake occur either through programmes, legislation, policies or administrative and other actions around an issue for which research has provided evidence, in this case social protection in Kenya. As such, *Utafiti Sera* is a “process”, “space”, “platform”, “forum” and a “vehicle” for transforming research evidence-based knowledge for policy uptake. The AIHD is supporting PASGR to implement the various activities under *Utafiti Sera*.

2. Objectives of *Utafiti Sera*

- i. Sustain a vibrant research-policy community on social protection in Kenya through well planned programme activities;
- ii. Generate new research evidence and synthesize existing relevant research evidence on social protection and make it available to policy makers and practitioners using policy briefs, newspaper articles, video documentary, among other forms of communication;

- iii. Engage key policy makers and practitioners through direct contact, policy advocacy and use of issue champions during breakfast meetings, policy debates and workshops.

In line with these objectives, the PASGR and AIHD have organized a one-day forum on Research-Policy-Practitioners Community on Social Protection in Kenya on **May 10, 2016**, at **Crowne Plaza Hotel, Sabaki meeting room, Nairobi** starting from **0800 to 1600 hours**. The one day forum constitutes an activity within the whole process of Utafiti Sera on social protection in Kenya.

3. Purpose of the forum

The aim of the one-day forum is to provide an opportunity for researchers, policy makers and practitioners to discuss pertinent and current issues on social protection in Kenya that need policy attention. This forum is a follow up of the May 13, 2015 meeting that was organized by PASGR and attended by national and international participants. The forum will discuss, among other issues:

- i. Legislation on social protection;
- ii. Universalism as a way of reducing targeting errors;
- iii. Exit/graduation mechanisms of cash transfer;
- iv. Mechanisms for financing social protection; and
- v. Effective coordination of social protection programmes.

During the forum, PASGR and AIHD will also present activities that have been planned for the year which members of the *Utafiti Sera* community will be required to support to ensure the programme's success.

4. Approach

The forum will adopt the following methodology:

- i. **Presentations:** these will include social protection programme experiences within the country related to the five areas enumerated above.

- ii. **Plenary discussions:** There will be plenary discussions to allow participants to interact with the presentations on the various thematic areas. Plenary discussions will augment presentation sessions and give the participants an opportunity to ask questions and make contributions on the topics.
- iii. Round-table discussions: The forum will adopt a round-table arrangement that will allow for close interaction and deliberations on the topical areas, the way forward for the initiative and other *Utafiti Sera* activities for the year 2016.

5. Participants

About 35 key policy makers, practitioners, and researchers have been invited to the forum. They include: Ministry of Devolution and Planning, Ministry of Labour and East African Affairs, County Governors, development partners, non-governmental organizations and institutions involved in social protection implementation, policy and research in Kenya.

6. Outcomes of the first forum

The following are the outcomes expected from the forum:

- i. An appreciation of the current level of implementation of social protection in the country;
- ii. Better understanding on how *Utafiti Sera* can inform and influence policy making and programming of social protection in Kenya and specifically on the five thematic areas;
- iii. A clear path towards implementation of *Utafiti Sera* programme, with clear roles of the members of the community of practice.