



Implementing a Public Policy to Extend Social Security to Informal Economy Workers in Zambia

Jairous Joseph Miti, Mikko Perkiö, Anna Metteri & Salla Atkins

To cite this article: Jairous Joseph Miti, Mikko Perkiö, Anna Metteri & Salla Atkins (2023): Implementing a Public Policy to Extend Social Security to Informal Economy Workers in Zambia, *Forum for Development Studies*, DOI: [10.1080/08039410.2023.2209583](https://doi.org/10.1080/08039410.2023.2209583)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08039410.2023.2209583>



© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 22 May 2023.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 413




View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Implementing a Public Policy to Extend Social Security to Informal Economy Workers in Zambia

Jairous Joseph Miti ^{ab}, Mikko Perkiö^a, Anna Metteri^c and Salla Atkins^{ad}

^aGlobal Health and Development, Faculty of Social Sciences, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland; ^bSchool of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Social Work and Sociology, University of Zambia, Lusaka, Zambia; ^cSocial Work, Faculty of Social Sciences, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland; ^dDepartment of Global Public Health, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden

Abstract This article analyses the strengths and bottlenecks of institutional capacity between social security institutions implementing the reform in Zambia, which focuses to provide social security to small-scale dairy farmers, a group of informal economy workers. Zambia's informal economy workers absorb over 80 per cent of the labour force. This is a qualitative study of institutional capacity in the extension of social security. Twenty-one interviews were conducted with participants from Farmers' Cooperatives (MCC), National Pension Scheme Authority (NAPSA), and Dairy Association of Zambia (DAZ). We selected participants through a purposive sampling technique. We reflected on data using a Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) built on thematic analysis. Analysis suggests that the institutions of the partnership are committed towards extending social security to informal economy workers. There was low involvement of local NAPSA officers in the project design and their role during implementation of the pension extension was unclear. This contributed to a lack of trust by some non-NAPSA members towards social security institutions. Knowledge and beliefs about the capabilities of implementers were essential in the activities for implementing the public policy on the extension of social security. However, there are several implementation lacunas concerning the process, its overarching infrastructure, and adequate human resources. There is a critical need to address gaps in process and procedures, equipment and materials, infrastructure, human resource, trust, and knowledge of context for the extension of social security to informal economy workers in Zambia. This could make the new public policy scheme more attainable.

Keywords: social security; public policy; pension; informal economy; rural; farmer

Introduction

In 2019, the Zambian government enacted *Statutory Instrument (SI) No. 72 (2019)* that provided and enhanced the legal basis for the extension of social security to people

working in the informal economy, including those who are self-employed. This enactment signified a strong political will and commitment in terms of inclusion of the uncovered groups, such as informal workers, in social security. Informed and compelled by new legislation, Zambia's National Pension Scheme Authority (NAPSA) designed a benefit package for informal economy workers in line with provisions of the SI and swiftly moved to implement this public policy among small-scale dairy farmers in Southern, Central and the Copperbelt Provinces. At a macro level, this public policy formulation was a result of strong ties between NAPSA, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos, THL). With regards to implementation, NAPSA engaged grassroot partners namely small-scale dairy farmers' cooperatives through their Milk Collection Centre's (MCCs) as an aggregator. Given the swift move towards implementation, there was a need to assess the institutional capacity of implementing organisations in order to determine its effect on the realisation of this public policy's goal.

One aspect that can determine policy success is institutional capacity in implementing the formulated policy. Though many countries are making progress towards the extension of social protection coverage, reinforcing their social protection systems and establishing effective social protection floors (ILO, 2021), little is known about the capacity of grassroot institutions such as small-scale dairy farmers' cooperatives in performing such a task. Evidence, however, suggests that different strategies including work with informal economy workers' associations can positively impact the course of extension of social protection coverage. For example, in Cape Verde, the government developed a proactive approach to reaching informal workers through communications campaigns specifically targeted to self-employed informal workers, as well as setting up social protection service centres in locations where there are large concentrations of informal workers thereby reducing the amount of time spent by workers in this category accessing the scheme services (Durán-Valverde et al., 2013). In Kenya, Mbao Pension Plan, established by the *Jua Kali* Association (informal sector is called *Jua Kali* in Swahili) and covering about 100,000 members as of 2018 is one example of an innovative way of extending social security to informal economy workers. Flexible contribution amounts and its grassroots presence makes the scheme attractive to people in the informal economy (Kwena and Turner, 2013). Other social protection initiatives on protecting informal sector workers exist in different low- and middle-income countries such as India (Asher et al., 2015), Ghana (Wireko and Beland, 2017), Zimbabwe (Chikova, 2013), and Thailand.

There is hope that these initiatives will reduce poverty and vulnerability to which informal economy workers are susceptible due to the nature of employment and lack of access to social protection. Social protection could counter a typical hardship of informal workers, with low or irregular income (ILO, 2020). In 2022 one of the external shocks being faced, exposing, and exacerbating the vulnerability of informal economy workers is the COVID-19 pandemic. In some countries, the pandemic meant restricting the movements of some informal economy workers and limiting

their ability to earn a living (ILO, 2020). The pandemic effects were mitigated by social assistance programmes, and non-contributory social protection schemes, including cash transfers by governments (Gentilini et al., 2020), but these measures were largely temporary and limited in coverage. In Zambia, there was an introduction of Emergency Social Cash Transfer as a response towards cushioning the loss of income due to COVID-19 in selected households. These were households that fit into predesigned assessment criteria.

In addition to the stringent eligibility criteria that excluded most people in the informal economy, it is unclear if interest and expansion of social assistance interventions due to COVID-19 will sustain. Capacity of existing systems play a large part in sustaining these efforts, as in Zambia for example, the donor community and UN agencies played a significant role in initiating and financing emergency cash transfers as part of COVID-19 relief. The emergency, and the external funding directed at it, meant that systems needed to be developed to address the crisis – but it is not clear whether these systems will stand; and will be available for informal workers.

Thus far, various efforts to expand social security to informal economy workers have been hindered by several factors including administrative and institutional factors, market, and design factors (Sojo, 2015, Gelepithis, 2018; ILO, 2019a; Zhao and He, 2021). Evidence from COVID-19 responses across countries also shows that implementation of social assistance interventions was limited by the fiscal space of countries, implementation capacity, and inadequate social registries, among others (Lowe et al., 2021).

Accordingly, the move towards universal social security coverage requires addressing institutional change as a crucial part of the locus of innovation (Sojo, 2015). Justifiably, bringing about institutional change calls for holistic understanding and analysis of the current capacity of institutions responsible for the implementation of social security to the uncovered. Because of the aforementioned reason, the ILO points out that the expansion of social protection coverage to informal economy workers requires extensive policy-making simultaneously on many fronts, such as on awareness, legal and administrative challenges (ILO 2019b).

The article investigates conditions of institutional capacity in the implementation of social security for informal economy workers in Zambia. The article contributes to the corpus of knowledge on the challenges of social security implementation for informal economy workers as well as theoretically on the application of the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) in social science studies. This contribution stems from the article's focus on a nascent policy experiment on social security in Zambia, a low-income country. The Zambian public policy experiment provides the possibility to explore institutional capacity challenges of the policy process through practitioner lenses. This information can inform future policy implementations.

As this article's data was collected in 2020, it may not reflect developments that have occurred since then as a result of changing political landscape or the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. As this article is being written, the current government

pursues a public policy change towards pension reform to allow members to make partial withdrawals of their mandatory social security savings. Implementation of this policy call and its implication on the initiative to extend social security to informal economy workers is yet to be analysed. The article does not also reflect the dynamics of relationship of partners such as the Government, ILO and the THL with regard to social security extension. Nevertheless, the findings of this study are relevant to understand the social protection landscape in Zambia, contributing to efforts of expansion for informal workers in other low- and middle-income settings.

Theoretical framework

We used Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) as an analytical framework. It is a conceptual framework that was developed to guide the systematic assessment of multilevel implementation contexts to identify factors that might influence intervention implementation and effectiveness (Damschroder et al., 2009). This is a framework that has been largely used in the implementation of health care interventions (e.g. Keith et al.). Thus, CFIR can be useful for guiding rapid-cycle evaluation of the implementation of practice transformation initiatives (Keith et al., 2017). Applied here, the framework helps to nest our study within the scientific environment of implementing social innovations. Based on the CFIR, the lens through which data were analysed as follows:

- i Inner setting, includes features of the implementing organisation that influence implementation. It comprises, among others implementation climate and leadership engagement.
- ii Outer setting, concerns the features of the external context or environment that affect implementation. It contains external policy and incentives.
- iii Characteristics of individuals involved in implementation. This dimension is about characteristics of individuals such as knowledge and beliefs about the intervention.

Methods

Study setting

The study was conducted in Lusaka and Southern Province of Zambia. Zambia is a low-income country with an estimated population of 17.8 million people. Majority of this population (55.3 per cent) reside in rural areas as compared to 44.7 per cent that inhabits urban areas (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2020). Zambia is also faced with the problem of poverty and inequality. National poverty levels are alarmingly high at 60 per cent with rural areas being worse at 76.6 per cent.

The country's economy is dependent on Copper and Cobalt exports to generate most of its foreign exchange revenue (Central Statistical Office, 2017). Consequently,

it remains susceptible to a high risk of external commodity price fluctuations. Periods of high copper prices and economic growth have not given any significant reduction in poverty nor created sustained formal sector employment. Instead, the country continues to experience escalated cost of living and expansion of the informal sector as people seek alternatives to meeting livelihood needs. The informal sector is host to over 74 per cent of the country's employed population. This includes persons who have a paid job either in cash, in kind or both; are in self-employment or are in contributing to family work (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2020). People working in the informal economy are inadequately covered by social security. They are often excluded from social assistance programmes such as social cash transfers and have for many years been ineligible to access contributory schemes due to the legal and design factors of these schemes. Pension schemes for example, targeted people with formal employment relationship, established through a written contract and providing for regular and predictable income (Miti, et al. 2021). Consequently, only a small fraction of the population has access to pension schemes and other contributory social security benefits.

Selection of Lusaka and Southern Provinces provides the context between the capital city and the region where the new policy is being implemented. Through this, we can investigate the initiatives to extend social security to the uncovered groups of informal economy workers. This study focused on institutions that were directly involved in the extension of coverage with small-scale dairy farmers in Southern Province, Zambia. Thus, the study used data collected from Milk Collection Centres (MCC cooperatives) and Dairy Association of Zambia (DAZ) offices in Southern Province, and NAPSA offices in Lusaka and Southern Province. These MCCs were aggregators in the extension of social security coverage while NAPSA offices at National and District level were responsible for policy oversight and implementation. DAZ provided an avenue through which NAPSA reached-out to farmers. Information box 1 provides detail on the levels of engagement by DAZ, MCCs and NAPSA Table 1.

In Lusaka, the study focused on NAPSA's Department responsible for the extension of coverage to the informal sector (ECIS). In Southern Province, the study focused on the nine cooperatives through Milk Collection Centers (MCCs) and three NAPSA offices responsible for the following districts: Mazabuka, Monze, Pemba, Choma, Namwala and Kalomo. Southern Province has the highest number of small-scale dairy farmers in Zambia, with over 2900 of them being affiliates of Dairy Association of Zambia (DAZ) through cooperatives. MCCs operate as aggregators with responsibilities for awareness raising about pension schemes, registration of new members on behalf of NAPSA as well as collection of contributions. NAPSA district offices have a responsibility of providing technical support to MCCs as they carry out their mandate. There is an assumption that this relationship and system of operation will facilitate the registration of more small-scale farmers into the pension scheme. Our study aimed to analyse institutional capacity for extending pension scheme coverage.

 Institutions and their roles in Extension of Social Security Coverage

Dairy Association of Zambia (DAZ)

- Facilitates NAPSA's engagement with small scale dairy farmers' cooperatives (MCCs)

Milk Collection Centres (MCC Cooperatives)

- Disseminates social security information to farmers
- Registers small scale farmers for social security
- Facilitates NAPSA contribution collection from members

National Pension Scheme Authority (NAPSA)

- Designs and provides social security and other short-term benefits in collaboration with partners
 - Communicate with members
 - Registers and collects contributions
-

Table 1 : Information box.***Study design***

We used an exploratory qualitative approach, collecting data with semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2014) to gain an in-depth understanding of implementer perspectives. The situation yielded an information-rich conversation relevant to theoretical and policy discourse. Our research team was a research partner to the implementing organisations when this policy partnership was formed. This gave us good access to all implication organisations. The policy implementation is taking early steps, which justifies the use of explorative qualitative methodology.

Study participants

The study used maximum variation purposive sampling technique (Creswell, 2014) to select participants as a strategy for identifying major stakeholders involved in designing, giving, receiving, or administering the program or service (Given, 2008). The inclusion of three relevant institutions; MCCs, NAPSA and DAZ; in the study ensured a broad range of perspectives since all participants had varying levels of involvement in the implementation of social security scheme for informal economy workers. Participants from MCCs were selected based on their leadership roles and direct involvement in the Scheme while participants from NAPSA were chosen based on their positions as project focal persons at the local and national level. DAZ officers were responsible for the facilitation of relationship between NAPSA and the cooperatives. Overall, participants in this study were information-rich owing to their experiences with the institutions of concern and their role during the extension of coverage. The total number of participants was 21. Table 2 below shows the participants' description.

Data collection: tools and process

The team developed semi-structured interview guides that were used for data collection by JM to collect data (Given, 2008). The data collection process also used

appropriate probes about institutional capacity in implementing pension schemes for small-scale farmers. The tool covered questions on the following: human resources, infrastructure, equipment and materials, process and procedures and other general factors in the implementation and operation of extension of coverage to small-scale dairy farmers. The average duration for each interview was 40 min. The researcher recorded the 21 interviews through note taking in designated writing pads.

NAPSA and DAZ facilitated the scheduling of appointments with prospective participants. JM conducted interviews in English and *ChiNyanja* languages, spoken by all participants and the researcher. The data collection was undertaken at the MCCs and NAPSA offices. This provided an opportunity for the researcher to observe the process of milk collection as well as the available infrastructure. This is an operating environment for the social security implication. The researcher introduced the research and its objectives to the participants.

After data collection, the researcher listened to the audio records of the interviews. This was followed by transcription of the recording. JM translated interviews conducted in *ChiNyanja* to English language. Transcriptions and notes taken during interviews formed the basis for data analysis.

Data analysis

We analysed the data using thematic analysis approach (Wendy et al., 2018). The process of data analysis involved reading field notes and transcripts, coding, sorting, and synthesising transcript contents in line with the focus of the study. The CFIR framework was utilised to formulate thematically organised interpretations of the data. The data analysis processes were theory informed as the themes of the interview guide were based on previous literature.

Ethical considerations

This study obtained ethical approval by the University of Zambia, Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Committee (Ref. 2020 Jan-014). Further, the study adhered

| Participant | Sex | | Total |
|-------------|------|--------|-------|
| | Male | Female | |
| NAPSA | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| MCC | 10 | 5 | 15 |
| DAZ | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| Total | 13 | 8 | 21 |

Table 2: Participant description.

to all the ethical standards for the conduct of social sciences research. During interviews, all participants gave informed consent for their participation in the study. Reporting of results uses pseudonyms to keep participants' details as anonymous. The first author was in the custody of all records and notes.

Results: internal and external factors depicting institutional capacity

Results show the need for enhanced institutional capacity if the implementation of social security coverage to informal economy workers is to be achieved. The study highlights factors that may influence the implementation of social security extension as a social policy issue. These factors include: inadequate human resource levels, lack of equipment, lack of clarity on roles and jurisdictions, and lack of trust in insurance schemes.

Inadequate human resource levels have negative effects on service delivery

NAPSA has an elaborate institutional structure that ensures vibrant operations in its traditional member category of formal employees. The different units of NAPSA have been mobilised to take part in the extension of coverage as an institutional programme. This pooling of units ensures that service delivery is entrenched in all departments/units. However, the unit responsible for planning, coordination and operationalisation of the extension of social security to informal economy workers is lean, with only three people—one manager and two project officers. The interviewer was informed that:

As you may have noticed, our unit is new and is not adequately staffed. There are only three of us here. Given the amount of work that is required to be undertaken, I think we need more staff though other units help us as well. We are overseeing the implementation of extending coverage. The problem is that the informal economy is a very big sector in terms of people working in this category. Our current staffing level is surely something that has lots of work in this regard (NAPSA staff).

Some NAPSA district offices visited also showed that personnel are overwhelmed with their responsibilities such as carrying out compliance inspections, attending court sessions on matters before the court, grievance management and preparing reports, among others. The introduction of electronic systems that facilitates self-registration and other services has not eased the workload of officers as one would expect. This is on account of poor internet connectivity, and potential members not using the designed electronic platforms. Officers employed as data entry clerks have assumed other roles thereby requiring a redefinition of their job description.

On the side of MCCs, it appeared that most cooperatives had adequate personnel given the type of their activities. There were board members who provided oversight

roles for the functioning of the cooperatives and management teams, which handled the day-to-day activities of the cooperative. Members of the latter were employees of the cooperative. They included an accountant, manager, and milk collection attendant. There was no autonomy in the management team to make decisions with regard to some matters such as expenditures, which sometimes delayed the implementation of some activities. Worth noting is that employees practiced role differentiation, with each of them performing respective tasks. However, some cooperatives did not see low number of employees as a problem given their business and scope of operations even including new responsibilities. One leader of the MCC said that:

For us, the three employees and the board members we have are enough to discharge the daily work of the cooperatives. Maybe the challenge can be now that NAPSA is giving us this extra responsibility. It is either we hire another person or just add the work to that of the accountant who may also require some training. (MCC Leader)

Another dimension to human resources, especially at the cooperative is the level of remuneration for employees. Interviews with employees suggested that their earnings are very low in comparison to the domestic and personal development needs, as well as statutory provisions. One of the employees at the MCC said:

Our salaries are very low. My salary is US\$ 45 per month. I still have family to support, and my husband is not in employment. As you know, this place is along the highway, so commodities are expensive. (Participant 9, MCC)

A similar view was shared by one manager:

Here our lowest paid employee gets US\$ 45 per month, while the highest paid gets around US\$ 80 per month. Therefore, you can already tell that our conditions are poor, but we have little option because also the cooperative is not making much money. All the business ventures we have such as hummer mill and welding do not yield any profit. (MCC Leader)

Lack of equipment and material affect provision of social security

Institutions engaged in this study had a physical presence in the districts, with geographical location for easy identity and visit by prospective project beneficiaries. Some NAPSA district and regional offices had inadequate record keeping and operational requirements such as computers and printers. This problem was also the case for some MCCs. All MCCs had available telecommunication systems called Digital Information Management System (DIMS) through which farmers receive information via text message to their mobile phones relating to their milk supply, payments, dairy inputs as well as any other relevant communication from MCCs. MCCs were operating the DIMS with support from cooperating partners and DAZ. Alluding to this, one participant said that:

The MCCs have computers but as you may have observed, most of the MCCs have very old and malfunctioning computers. It is somehow difficult to enter and store information. Thanks to our partners, we now managed to have Digital Information Management System (DIMS), which operates in such a way that you can send bulky messages to farmers, as well as inform them about their milk supply and payment. (DAZ staff)

A catalogue of existing materials and competencies is shown in [Table 2](#) below. From this inventory, it is discernible that the level of effectiveness and engagement by MCCs will differ. Some MCCs will not be able to provide relevant information electronically to NAPSA because of a lack of equipment and inadequate capacity of the personnel.

Competence in basic computer software is essential for enforcing payments and record keeping. Out of nine MCCs studied, eight MCCs had computers, though only four had their computers connected to the internet. All the MCCs had their DIMS Tablets connected to the internet. Five of the MCCs did not have scanners, while four did not have printers. Seven MCC management teams had competence in operating with basic computer software MS Word, and eight with MS Excel. However, none of them had an active Mobile Money account nor experience with the eNAPSA system.

Clarity of roles and jurisdiction improve performance of institutions

NAPSA in general had clear procedures and processes for registering members, addressing grievances, and making pay-outs. However, there was a lack of clarity on the role of local NAPSA offices in the implementation of social security for informal economy workers. Interviewees appreciated both the online and physical registration mechanisms as well contribution modalities such as through mobile money and deduction from milk payments for registered farmers. However, MCCs were ignorant about grievance handling on the project. At the same time, they had no prior relationship with local NAPSA offices where staff also indicated not having been fully involved in the preparation of extension of coverage. Thus, some NAPSA officers in Southern Province indicated a lack of clarity on what their roles would be in extending social security coverage seeing that most of the activities and initiatives were being undertaken by people from Lusaka, and local offices were only involved intermittently. One officer expressed their view as below:

I am not sure of the role I will play other than being aware that I will be fully involved. For now, my role is not defined clearly. However, if it is covered under my current job descriptions, I will do it. There is no stated role for us in job description about ECIS. At the same time, there has not been any formal or verbal communication on what this work entails. It appears we are working with assumptions. (NAPSA staff) ([Table 3](#))

Knowledge of local context and institutional reputation affect information dissemination and take up of social security

Interviews at the MCC level were concerned with the lack of trust for NAPSA products and other insurance schemes by some members of the local community. They indicated that people do not have trust in registering and contributing to social security because of their disappointing experience with such initiatives as weather index insurance under Farmers Input Support Programme as well as some financial institutions that did not provide services as they promised despite farmers making contributions/savings. This was also made clear in the statements as one below:

I think NAPSA has a lot of work to try and gain confidence of the people because there are many retirees that have not been paid their retirement benefits. Some of these retirees have even died and their families are still trying to access those benefits. (MCC manager)

Another view was expressed as follows:

You see, it is better to contribute to the pension scheme when you can see the benefits. Here, people stopped trusting NAPSA not because of how NAPSA alone operates but also other pension institutions in this country. There are many situations when people have retired but they do not receive money on time such that they even become destitute. (MCC attendant)

At the same time, employees at MCC level said that there were other competing savings schemes such as rotating savings, and village banking amongst farmers. Some of these initiatives were promoted by Non-Governmental Organisations working in the area. For some farmers, it was better to save money through the village banking system, where they can easily access the funds, rather than contribute to pension, which they are not sure when they will receive. Therefore, NAPSA's initiative to extend social security competes with rotating savings and village bank initiatives in as far as contribution/saving amounts and benefits are concerned. Thus, leadership of the MCCs suggested that NAPSA needs to know some of these schemes and design a scheme that responds to farmers' needs.

Another issue that relates to knowledge of context is that most small-scale farmers who are advanced in age (e.g. above 55 years old) owned more cattle in the villages than young people, who in most cases were dependants. In addition, some of these farmers were engaged in dairy farming as a 'secondary occupation' having retired from occupations in the formal sector in public and private institutions, and later reclined to their villages. Thus, the project may suffer from low take-up because most dairy farmers were already advanced in age thereby being systematically ineligible for registration to pension schemes.

| Reference Item | Site | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------|---------|--------|-------|-------|---------|-------|--------|--------|
| | Magoye | Munjile | Kaumba | Monze | Pemba | Namwala | Choma | Kalomo | Batoka |
| Computer | Y | N | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Internet Connectivity | N | N | N | Y | N | Y | Y | N | Y |
| Printer | N | N | N | Y | N | Y | Y | N | Y |
| Scanner | N | N | N | Y | N | Y | Y | N | Y |
| DIMS Tablet (With Internet)* | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| MS Excel Competence | Y | Y | N | Y | N | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| MS Word Competence | Y | N | N | Y | N | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Mobile Money Account | N | N | N | N | N | N | N | N | N |
| Capacity to Facilitate Contributions | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Contributes to Main Scheme | Y | N | N | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | N |
| eNAPSA Experience | N | N | N | N | N | N | N | N | N |

Table 3: Situation on capacity of MCCs – equipment, material, and infrastructure.

Y = Yes; N = No.

*Unclear if this will continue since DIMS was under a specific project.

Discussion

This article examined the institutional capacity to extend social security to small-scale dairy farmers in Zambia. It shows a number of gaps, such as inadequate human resources, lack of equipment and material in some centres, and lack of clarity of roles and jurisdictions among officers, all of which can affect institutional performance. Findings also suggest that the extension of social security should take into consideration the knowledge of local context and institutional reputation as these can affect implementation.

The results are important because they uncover the situation of the capacity of institutions involved in the implementation of social security for small-scale farmers. This is vital to build a social security system that has an institutional framework endowed with capacity at different levels that can contribute to realising social security goals. Findings of this study about engagement of informal economy associations are also reflecting the trajectory of efforts at building social protection systems and savings among informal economy workers in Kenya through the Mbao Pension (Kabare, 2018), and similar initiatives on the continent.

Inclusion of cooperatives in the implementation of social security by NAPSA is important and provides an opportunity to further interrogate how these institutions work as they advance the welfare of their members (ILO, 2014). These institutions have a relevant role in awareness raising and enabling the easy payment of contributions. In Thailand, the collaboration between HomeNet Thailand – a network of home-based worker groups which operates across the country and the Thai Social Security Fund have made it easy for home-based workers to access information and ensure compliance with contributions (UNDP, 2021). Accordingly, findings of our study add an understanding of social security extension and institutions planning for it. This value comes from the contextual presentation of a social security extension in a low-income context and first-hand information generated through interviews with informal economy workers and implementers. It presents the situation of capacity for social security implementation using the experienced social security institution (NAPSA) and MCCs. However, this article does not provide a comprehensive review of the extension of pension schemes given the broad nature of social security for informal economy workers and the complexities and processes surrounding its implementation.

The inner setting of the implementation, described as features of the administration organisation that might affect the implementation (Damschroder et al., 2009; Keith et al., 2017), shows that the implementation climate and leadership engagement calls for capacity strengthening. This is because there was no full involvement of NAPSA officers at district level in the project design. At the same time, their level of involvement in implementation was also unclear. It also highlighted concerns about the adequacy of human resource and role differentiation, and labour automation. Relativity of the adequacy of human resources is based on the observation that while

some MCCs considered the number of employees as adequate, there was a clear indication that extension of coverage will bring about additional responsibilities. This could lead to a demand for more income by the employees. For attainment of the social security goals for informal economy workers, shared knowledge and involvement of all partners is relevant to foster implementation. In the same way, functional differentiation was observed within NAPSA as well as aggregators is an essential aspect of effective project implementation that should be upheld. However, NAPSA's unit responsible for the extension of coverage did not have adequate human resources. This situation depicts insufficient capacity that affects the extension of social security as was also reported in other contexts (ILO, 2016; RNSF, 2017; Phe Goursat and Pellerano, 2016). With insufficient human resources, it will be difficult to extend social security coverage to the rural informal economy workers because this category requires various services with implications on the number of human resources required.

In addition, a lack of clarity on the initial roles to be played by local NAPSA offices and cooperatives (in particular, grievance mechanisms) in the early stages of the intervention showed gaps in communication and a lack of shared information. The intervention appeared to be the sole responsibility of officers at the head office. This situation suggests the need for enhancing informal and formal bonds in order to foster a shared vision and information (Damschroder et al., 2009). Further, implementation climate and leadership engagement as depicted above suggest the need for adequate human resources, role differentiation and stakeholder involvement. This has the potential to foster effective implementation.

In relation to theory on the outer setting of the implementation (Damschroder et al., 2009), this study finds that public perception of social security institutions, profile of potential members and other existing saving schemes affect member adoption and consequently implementation of the new scheme. When people have negative perceptions about the institution providing social security, it becomes unlikely that they can adopt the intervention.

Our findings further show aspects of mistrust of social security institutions. This is in tandem with those of other countries such as in Ghana (Teye et al., 2015), where the perception and the reality of embezzlement of funds, corruption and delay in processing retirement benefits created a bad reputation for social security institutions. Factors that influence perception such as corruption and delays in reimbursements affect the uptake of social security and health insurance by residents (Kannan, 2010). The situation suggests that citizens do not trust these institutions and the level of willingness to contribute to the pension scheme may be affected (Adewole et al., 2015). In India, distrust of public health services played a critical role in hindering informal construction workers from accessing services (Santalahti et al., 2020). Perceptions of corruption and existing distrust of institutions erode public confidence in both the scheme and institutions providing services. This situation suggests that when strengthening public services of the informal economy workers in LMICs, trust plays a pivotal

role. Extension of pension schemes, especially to the informal economy, may suffer from the bad reputation of the institutions as well as from administrative bottlenecks.

This article acknowledges that it is important for interventions to taking an interest to understand the local context in terms of the profile of the targeted beneficiaries, norms, and belief systems about care for elderly people as well as reciprocity and existing saving schemes. This suggests the importance of participatory approaches that consider grassroots institutions in terms of their role in product design as well as implementation.

Knowledge about these value systems as cardinal elements of the outer setting will help in designing a scheme that responds to the needs of informal economy workers. Generating such knowledge is made possible through the social capital of the organisation, which is already existing between NAPSA and cooperatives. We subscribe to the description of social capital as the quality and the extent of those relationships and including dimensions of shared vision and information sharing (Damschroder et al., 2009). NAPSA should sustain its social capital through continuous engagements and providing support to cooperatives in areas of mutual interest. In this regard, we consider the need for increased registration of small-scale farmers as an area of mutual interest.

Achieving the aim of registering small-scale farmers by aggregators will require motivated human resources in the cooperatives. Hence the need to find ways of incentivising personnel through advocacy for improved conditions of service such as a rise in monthly earnings. Our study shows that most employees in these cooperatives have very low remuneration. A positive change in their remuneration and improvements in general conditions of work can enhance their output in sensitisation and possible registration of members. Research has shown that institutions can foster employee motivation through factors such as job security, good salary and benefits (Ghodrati and Tabar, 2013). Such interventions are not only mere motivational issues but also contribute to improving their livelihoods, fostering human rights and the ILO's decent work agenda.

On the aspects of characteristics of individuals involved in implementation, registration of members to the scheme showed the existence of knowledge and appreciation of the intervention. There is self-efficacy in participants with regard to the extension of coverage. This means that officers believed in their own capabilities to execute courses of action to achieve the goals of the project. This was important because theoretically, it is argued that individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to make a decision to embrace the intervention and exhibit committed use even in the face of obstacles (Damschroder et al., 2009). This self-efficacy has, therefore, the potential to influence employees sharing of information on the benefits of the intervention with members of the community. Additionally, the competence in computer software, as well as with mobile money solutions as seen in Table 2 are important basic skills for the operationalisation of the scheme as they relate to report writing, facilitation of registration and member contribution.

Zambia has scaled up efforts towards social security for informal economy workers. The importance of institutional capacity in social policy making has been highlighted in other countries (Teye et al., 2015). This shows that while most countries are implementing social security in general and pension schemes in particular, gaps exist in the institutional capacity with the potential to affect service delivery. Studies on social security for the informal sector with a focus on institutional capacity are scarce, but our analysis prove that a well-established institutional capacity has critical potential to push ahead high-quality policy implementation.

Conclusion

Given the importance of extending social security coverage to informal workers, institutional capacity needs prime attention. Our article has shown that the process and procedures, equipment and materials, infrastructure and human resources all need attention to ensure a smooth operation of the extension of pensions to informal workers in Zambia. Key to smooth implementation is policy design and practice that feed to each other, while building trust and appreciation of policy beneficiaries. Taking participatory approaches in policy design, and feeding beneficiary and implementer perspectives into policy design may be useful. Overall, addressing the fundamental institutional needs discussed here sets up capacities essential for a successful policy.

Recommendations

The article makes the following recommendations:

- i. Identify and understand operation of existing saving schemes: Awareness of these schemes will help to draw lessons about willingness to save for retirement, and saving behaviour, among others and avoid pitfalls of managing a saving pension scheme for informal economy workers.
- ii. Acquire knowledge about socio-cultural context of potential members: This will include knowledge about kinship care for the elderly and perceptions of the scheme including matters related to trust among members. Such knowledge will inform the design of the scheme so that it speaks to aspirations of potential members.
- iii. Provide adequate human resource: As extension of social security to informal economy workers is a new undertaking, there is need to deploy adequate personnel to respond to the various needs of the sector in line with the designed programme.
- iv. Build and enhance capacity of cooperatives: As aggregators, cooperatives require support such as human resource training, computers, laptops/phones as well as purchase of data bundles in order to facilitate registration of members.

- v. Build Trust and confidence: There is need to build trust and public confidence in the scheme and institutions involved in extension of coverage. Trust is a resource that can motivate people to enrol in the scheme.

Acknowledgements

Milk Collection Centres, National Pensions Scheme Authority and Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare for their technical support.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Jairous Joseph Miti is a doctoral researcher at Tampere University, Finland; and a lecturer at the University of Zambia, Zambia. His research focus is extension of social security to informal economy workers. He undertakes research and capacity building activities in social policy, social protection, social work, and health-social determinants of health in low and middle income countries.

Dr Mikko Perkiö (MA, PhD in social policy Tampere University) has studied interlinking dynamics of social security, precarious employment, and social inclusion. He directs the SAFINET, Southern African and Finnish Higher Education Institutions' Network for Health and Well-Being.

Anna Metteri, PhD in Social Work, is Senior Research Fellow at Tampere University, Finland. She is specialized in social work in health and social determinants of health. She is active in global social work and interested in social protection coverage and expansion.

Salla Atkins is Professor of Public Health (Especially Global Health) at Tampere University, Finland, also affiliated to Karolinska Institutet. Her work centres on social determinants of health. She has a specific interest in social protection coverage and expansion.

ORCID

Jairous Joseph Miti  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3358-7253>

References

- Adewole, D. A., A. M. Adebayo, E. I. Udeh, V.N. Shaahu and M.D. Dairo, 2015, 'Payment for health care and perception of the national health insurance scheme in a rural area in Southwest Nigeria', *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, Vol. 93, No. 3, pp. 648–654. doi:10.4269/ajtmh.14-0245.

- Asher, M., Y. Vora and D. Maurya, 2015, 'An analysis of selected pension and health care initiatives for informal sector workers in India', *Social Policy and Administration*. doi:10.1111/spol.12167.
- Central Statistical Office Zambia, 2017, *2017 Labour Force Survey Report*. Central Statistical Office.
- Chikova, H., 2013, 'Social protection in Zimbabwe – country paper', *International Conference SASPEN - FES 'Social Protection for Those Working Informally. Social & Income (In)Security in the Informal Economy'*, (September), 16–17.
- Creswell, J.W., 2014, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th ed., Vol. 6, Issue 2, SAGE Publications.
- Damschroder, L.J., D.C. Aron, R.E. Keith, S.R. Kirsh, J.A. Alexander and J.C. Lowery, 2009, 'Fostering implementation of health services research findings into practice: A consolidated framework for advancing implementation science', *Implementation Science*, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 1–15.
- Durán-Valverde, F., J.F. Aguilar, J.F. Ortiz Vindas, D. Muñoz Corea, A.C. de Lima Vieira, L. and Tessier, 2013, *Innovations in Extending Social Insurance Coverage to Independent Workers: Experiences from Brazil, Cape Verde, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Philippines, France and Uruguay*, ILO Extension of Social Security Paper No. 42.
- Gelepithis, M., 2018, 'Three paths to more encompassing supplementary pensions', *Journal of Social Policy*, Vol. 47, No. 3, pp. 603–623.
- Gentilini, U., M., Almenfi, I. Orton and P. Dale, 2020, *Social Protection and Jobs Responses to COVID-19: A Real-Time Review of Country Measures*, Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Ghodrati, H. and R.G. Tabar, 2013, 'A study on effective factors on employee motivation', *Management Science Letters*, Vol. 3, pp. 1511–1520.
- Given, L.M., 2008, *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- ILO, 2014, *Promoting cooperatives: An information guide to ILO Recommendation No. 193* (Issue 193).
- ILO, 2016, *Extending the Social Security Coverage for Farmers in the Republic of Moldova Findings and Recommendations based on the Social Security Assessment Survey*.
- ILO, 2019a, *Interactions Between Workers' Organizations and Workers in the Informal Economy: A Compendium of Practice*, Geneva.: International Labour Organization.
- ILO, 2019b, *Extending Social Security to Workers in the Informal Economy: Lessons from International Experience*, Geneva: ILO.
- ILO, 2020, 'The Impact of the COVID-19 on the Informal Economy in Africa and the Related Policy Responses', https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/—africa/—ro-abidjan/documents/briefingnote/wcms_741864.pdf, Accessed 30 March 2023.
- ILO, 2021, *World Social Protection Report 2020–22: Social Protection at the Crossroads – In Pursuit of a Better Future*, Geneva: ILO.
- Kabare, K., 2018, 'The Mbao Pension Plan: Savings for the Informal-Sector Krystle Kabare Working Paper', October 2018. <https://www.developmentpathways.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Mbao.pdf>. Accessed: 17th April, 2023
- Kannan, K.P.M., 2010, 'Social security for the working poor in India: Two national initiatives', *Development*, Vol. 53, No. 3, pp. 338–342. doi:10.1057/dev.2010.37.
- Keith, R.E., J.C. Crosson, A.S. O'Malley, D.A. Cromp and E.F. Taylor, 2017, 'Using the consolidated framework for implementation research (CFIR) to produce actionable findings: A rapid-cycle evaluation approach to improving implementation', *Implementation Science*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 1–12.

- Kwena, R.M. and J.A. Turner, 2013, 'Extending pension and savings scheme coverage to the informal sector: Kenya's Mbao Pension Plan', *International Social Security Review*, Vol. 66, No. 2, pp. 79–99.
- Lowe, C., A. McCord and R. Beazley, 2021, *National Cash Transfer Responses to Covid-19: Operational Lessons Learned for Social Protection System-Strengthening and Future Shocks*, Working Paper, London: ODI.
- Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2020, *Labour Force Survey Report*, Lusaka: MLSS.
- Miti, J.J., M. Perkiö, A. Metteri and S. Atkins, 2021, 'Pension coverage extension as social innovation in Zambia: informal economy workers' perceptions and needs', *International Social Security Review*, Vol. 74, No. 2/2021, pp. 29–53.
- Phe Goursat, M. and L. Pellerano, 2016, *Extension of Social Protection to Workers in the Informal Economy in Zambia: Lessons Learnt From Field Research on Domestic Workers, Small Scale Farmers and Construction Workers*.
- RNSF, 2017, *Extending Coverage: Social Protection and the Informal Economy. Experiences and Ideas from Researchers and Practitioners, Research, Network and Support Facility*, Rome: ARS Progetti; Milan: Lattanzio Advisory; and Brussels: AGRER.
- Santalahti, M., K. Sumit and M. Perkiö, 2020, 'Barriers to accessing health care services: A qualitative study of migrant construction workers in a southwestern Indian city', *BMC Health Services Research*, Vol. 20, No. 1, Article number: 619.
- Sojo, A., 2015, 'Including informal economy workers in contributory social protection: Current challenges in Latin America', *International Social Security Review*, Vol. 68, No. 4, pp. 69–92.
- Teye, Y.K., A.A. Arhin and A.S. Anamzoya, 2015, 'Achievements and challenges of the national health insurance scheme in Ghana', *Current Politics and Economies of Africa*, Vol. 8, No. 8, pp. 487–512.
- UNDP, 2021, *Informality and Social Protection in African Countries: A Forward-looking Assessment*, New York: UNDP.
- Wendy, B., S. Rogers and C. Willig, 2018, Introduction, in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Wireko, I. and D. Beland, 2017, 'Transnational actors and health care reform: Why international organizations initially opposed, and later supported, social health insurance in Ghana', *Journal of Social Welfare*.
- Zhao, L. and X. He, 2021, 'Lessons from China on different approaches to pension coverage extension', *International Social Security Review*, Vol. 74, pp. 5.