

SOCIAL PROTECTION

Non-State Actors in Social Protection Services

OVERVIEW

RESEARCH IDENTIFIES BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY

One of the most comprehensive studies of non-State social protection services in Africa reveals that more help can be delivered to more people in more places – with existing resources. To do this policy needs to recognise, harness and integrate non-state actors, especially small community-based organisations (CBOs), in service provision.

Nine independent studies in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Senegal, Tanzania and Uganda identified 4,114 non-state actors (NSAs) in 30 districts. CBOs (self-help groups and membership associations) are the most numerous, widespread, accessible, relevant and effective social service providers, yet the majority operate almost completely outside State systems, plans or support.

This massive resource is under-utilised and opportunity for synergy is missed.

More than 90% of the population who have no access to formal State social protection services depend on NSAs to survive vulnerability.

90% OF THE POPULATION...
DEPEND ON
NSAs TO SURVIVE...

Perhaps the most important finding of all is that informal CBOs using traditional and trust-based structures and management are highly accountable and self-regulated. Their small size, ad hoc nature and rustic methods – regarded by policy as fatal flaws – are in fact their great strength. They operate with, ingenuity, cost-efficiency and intimate knowledge of the needs and wishes of their constituents. Uniquely, they belong to the people they serve; and they serve the people they belong to.

CBOs are under-resourced, uncoordinated and have room for improvement, but what

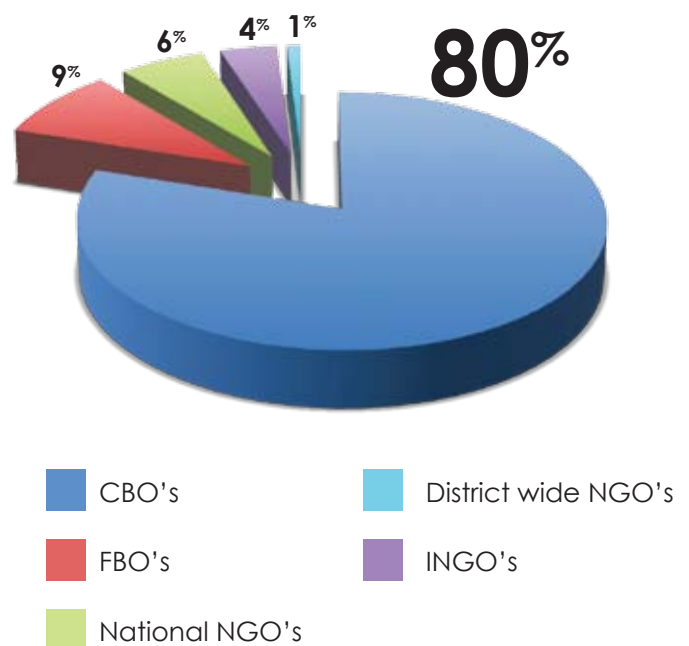
they already are and what they already achieve is arguably the current “best practice” in social service delivery in a context where the State is limited in scope and reach.

POLICY CHALLENGES

Governments do not need to change small non-State actors into something they are not; they need to support what they already are and enable them to operate – in their own way – even more effectively. Policy needs to engage and harness what CBOs are good at before trying to fix what they are bad at.

In that very difficult but essential concept shift lies an opportunity to greatly increase and improve social service delivery – at little or no additional cost.

Non-State social protection service providers



RELATED SOCIAL PROTECTION POLICY BRIEFS

Research findings and data from the nine studies – all coordinated by PASGR – are available in other briefs, full national reports and a regional synthesis. Key issues and

policy imperatives are highlighted by the following policy briefs

SOCIAL PROTECTION 2

Role of CBOs

The smallest players are the biggest factor

SOCIAL PROTECTION 3

Governance

Trust traditions work well in a modern world

SOCIAL PROTECTION 4

Accountability

The Grass roots are best practice in accountability

SOCIAL PROTECTION 5

Finance

Making the most of poor-to-poor finance

SOCIAL PROTECTION 6

Registration

State engagement with small social protection providers

SOCIAL PROTECTION 7

Nature of services

The difference between a bandage and a cure

SOCIAL PROTECTION 8

Mapping

Knowing the 'informal' national force