Asrani Gopaul, 
Senior Lecturer 
Social Policy and Social Protection 
University of Mauritius

The social resilience of small state Mauritius: how far can universal social protection financing create better social resilience in a country with limited resources.

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Social Protection and Climate change in the SADC 
2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
The excessive universal social protection system has been a solution to fight against under employment of resources in the 1970’s, and against external shocks in the 1990’s.

Today, changing neo-liberal globalised economic environment and the volatility of economic environment, we are facing a situation where we risk becoming more vulnerable because of the high cost of implementation of universal social protection.

Our main enemy being limited resources and dependency created by Universal social protection backed by electorally motivated policies.
It is a known fact that when it comes to comprehensive social protection Mauritius tend to be at the forefront of Africa. Despite the high cost of implementation and the fact that resources are very scarce.

Mauritius social protection system has always been one of the most reliable tools in the fight against external shocks putting the island in a better position than many other small states in Africa to mitigate risks caused by climate change.

This study shows how Mauritius has been able to be better prepared against external shocks while sustaining universal social protection and social security despite different past episodes of conditional loans from IMF/ World Bank.
The new challenges or the new demons

Major demon, climate change and delay to create a climate adaptation plan for the
depth

According to policymakers we are lagging behind in sectors such as socio economic vulnerability eg. Appropriate policies to cater for migrant labour to bring them at par with local workers. It is actually being reported that we are not protecting our migrant labourers. No appropriate shock responsive policies against climate change except for some decisions taken by the National disaster risk mitigation committee. True it is costly to extend social protection but are we setting our priority right?

Basic question to ask for a small country like Mauritius ... ae we not engage in some kind of distortion between revenue and cost of the free universal social protection scheme. Or is it really achieving its aim of social justice in this era of climate change adaptation.
Are we really prepared to face our new demons.

People living in coastal region need to be relocated because of climate change yet we are still discussing about the number of room to be included in social housing.

The richest top 20% of our retired elderly still enjoys the same amount of retired pension compared to the 40% poor who are retired.

We still do not have a strong environment protection plan, hotels are still obtaining permit to modify coastal zones despite the speed of environmental degradation.
This study shows to us how Mauritius has been able to be better prepared against external shocks by sustaining universal social protection and social security despite different past episodes of conditional loans from IMF/ World Bank. To the detriment of other more important policies that in the long run might be more beneficial to the welfare and well being of people.
1. Massive social protection spending can be a double edge knife as these policies which were initially aimed at fighting poverty and under employment, requires massive capital investment. On another note these policies have also been used for political motives. Massive investment in social protection can be done only when a country has massive resources, the paradox is that resources are very scarce in Mauritius. Are we heading towards a catastrophic situation?

2. There has been a few cases of wastage for example BRP, Widows allowance m subsidies on basic food stuffs etc which are not being tackled for political motives. Today, changing neo-liberal globalised economic environment and due to the volatility of external factors, we are facing a situation where we risk to become more vulnerable.
3. We must not forget the high cost of implementation of universal social protection. Our main enemy being limited resources and dependency created by Universal social protection backed by electorally motivated policies. In some countries there is a lack of incentives to set up universal social protection coverage however in Mauritius we are facing a situation where there is too much politically oriented policies where we might end up like Greece.

4. Can a small state without resources afford to have universal BRP, an array of universal pensions, subsidies, free transport for student and old and a minimum salary policy to the detriment of more important policies?

5. The survey showed to us that a good majority of people were more concerned about climate change policies rather than socially helping those who do not deserve it the problem lies in choosing who to include and who to exclude.
Results from the survey among the 250 households showed that

1. People are concerned about the fact that there are other more important priorities for government to tackle rather than unsustainable social protection financing. They were aware of climate change problems and believed that government must tackle such issues.

2. They were aware that government was using social welfare programme and social protection financing to win the election but they were not ready to pay for these services (health, education etc).

3. Those living in coastal region were the more concerned about the issues.
4. Those interviewed mentioned that problems such as drugs addiction and rise in illicit activities and crime were directly related to loss of job that occurred for different reasons. (fall in tourist arrival, closure of factories, difficulties for young graduates to find jobs because of labour market mismatch). Reskilling was also very difficult as young graduates were unable to obtain finance. Those who have lost their jobs in the manufacturing sector were discriminated on the basis of age (mainly those are above 45). They strongly believe that unemployment pension should have existed instead of social assistance.
To conclude

With already a heavy burden of universal coverage Mauritius is finding it more and more difficult to design more comprehensive social policies pension and to cover climate change related dilemmas. But the main issue is to what extent should we go:

Is targeting a possible solution, political suicide V/S more responsible government

Sustainable development goals initiatives V/S small state reality

Lack resources V/S heavy public debt and budget deficit

and the big question:

How do we fight the demons ahead when you don’t have enough resources... is universal coverage still the solution ... should we change it to:
Responsibility first rather than Universality ???
THANK YOU!

Asrani Gopaul
Senior Lecturer
Social Policy and Social Work
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities
University of Mauritius
as.gopaul@uom.ac.mu

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