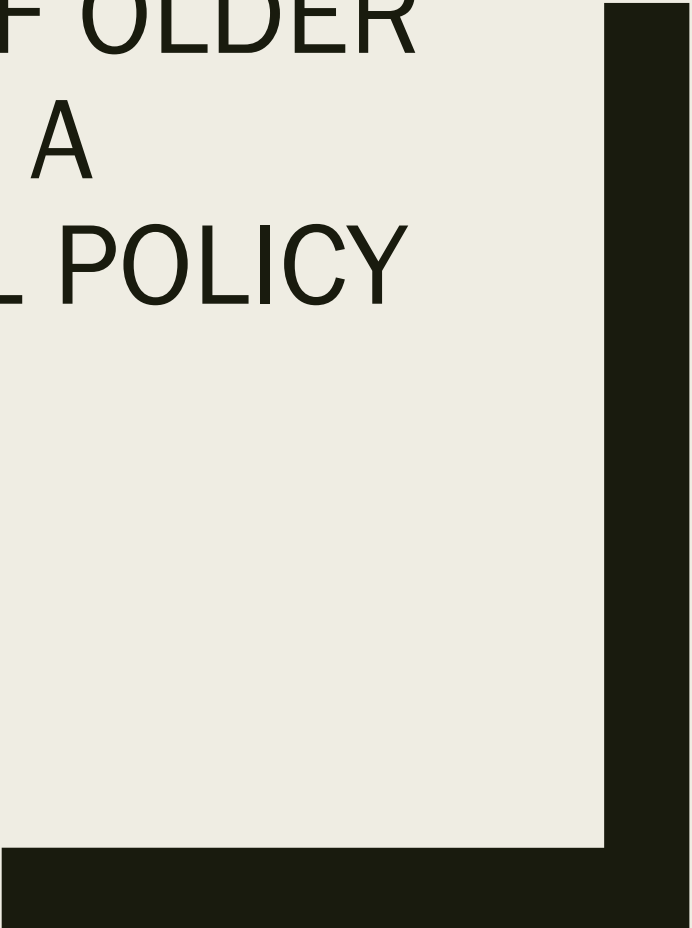




REALISING THE RIGHTS OF OLDER
WOMEN IN AFRICA: A
TRANSFORMATIVE SOCIAL POLICY
APPROACH

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Outline

- Introduction
- Social rights, social policy and older women in Africa
- Transformative social policy:
- Conclusion

Introduction

- Ageing world – Africa not an exception despite young population
- Need for attention on population ageing - by both policymakers and academics
- Ageing a process – case for consideration of provision and rights from a life-cycle perspective
- Little attention in Africa to ageing and older persons in Africa – most attention to youth and children
- Programmes and policies for older persons few, more rhetoric than reality
- Older person entitled to rights just like other individual in society; but violation of older persons' rights abound with little attention paid to rights of older persons (Doron et al)

- Older women located at the intersection of age and gender
- Status of women determined by traditional values, cultural norms and gender socialization and patriarchy – discriminates against girls and women through old age (Sossou 2015)
- Discussion on abuse and women rights – older women voices often excluded
- Very norms and roles that ensured respect, support and embeddedness may now lead to isolation, marginalization and vulnerability for women (Oppong 2006)
- Lifelong violation of rights persist into old age – difficult to break

Social rights and older women in Africa

- Older women inappropriately affected by a number of factors
 - *Care work is gender biased, unpaid – older women bear a significant burden of HIV and AIDS as caregivers to children and grandchildren (Nhongo 2004, Dhemba and Dhemba 2012, Nyirenda et al 2013)*
 - *Amongst the poorest category – a result of earlier discrimination e.g. access to schooling, access to decent jobs (Oppong 2016)*
 - *Greater health challenges and limited access (Nyirenda et al 2013, Straka 2006)*
 - *Physical, emotional, psychological abuse highest - Top targets to attacks and killings on allegations of witchcraft - linked to socio-economic aspects as the root including land, poverty, diseases (Olubukola et al (2015)*
 - *Lack of social security and financial barriers(Dhemba and Dhemba 2012, Straka 2006))*

Social rights for older women in Africa

- Discussion draws on social rights draws from T.H. Marshall (1954) – based on social provision, welfare and well being
- Distinguishes 3 rights that need to be pursued for the well being of a person – political, civil and social rights (disputable)
- Social rights – the right of well-being and welfare standards – often ignored with little attention especially in the case of older persons especially women
- Frameworks in Africa that advance rights of older women – AU Social Policy Framework, Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa
- Countries also adopted Acts and policies on older persons – South Africa, Zimbabwe, Lesotho
- Gender inequalities persist in old age – negative, visible, produces systematic social and economic inequalities in predominantly patriarchal societies

Social rights

- Extension of social rights regarded as the essence of social policy
- Criterion of social rights must be the degree to which they permit people to make their living standards independent of pure market forces – decommodification (Polanyi 1944)
- Extension of social rights a push back on capitalism
- Social rights work under principles of universalism - extending the benefits to the middle class, the presence of laws (

Social policy measures for older persons

- Older women face heightened precarity and vulnerability than other categories
- Advocacy has been limited – growing voice on social policy leans more towards social protection in the form of social pension
- Only one aspect – though necessary on its own is insufficient in bringing forth the wellbeing of a person
- Social pensions, means tested and targeted – South Africa, Namibia, Lesotho, Botswana and Zanzibar (Dhemba & Dhemba 2015,
- Even in this countries that could be seen as progressive in provision of income older women face barriers to access of health services, HIV and AIDs services, elder abuse continues

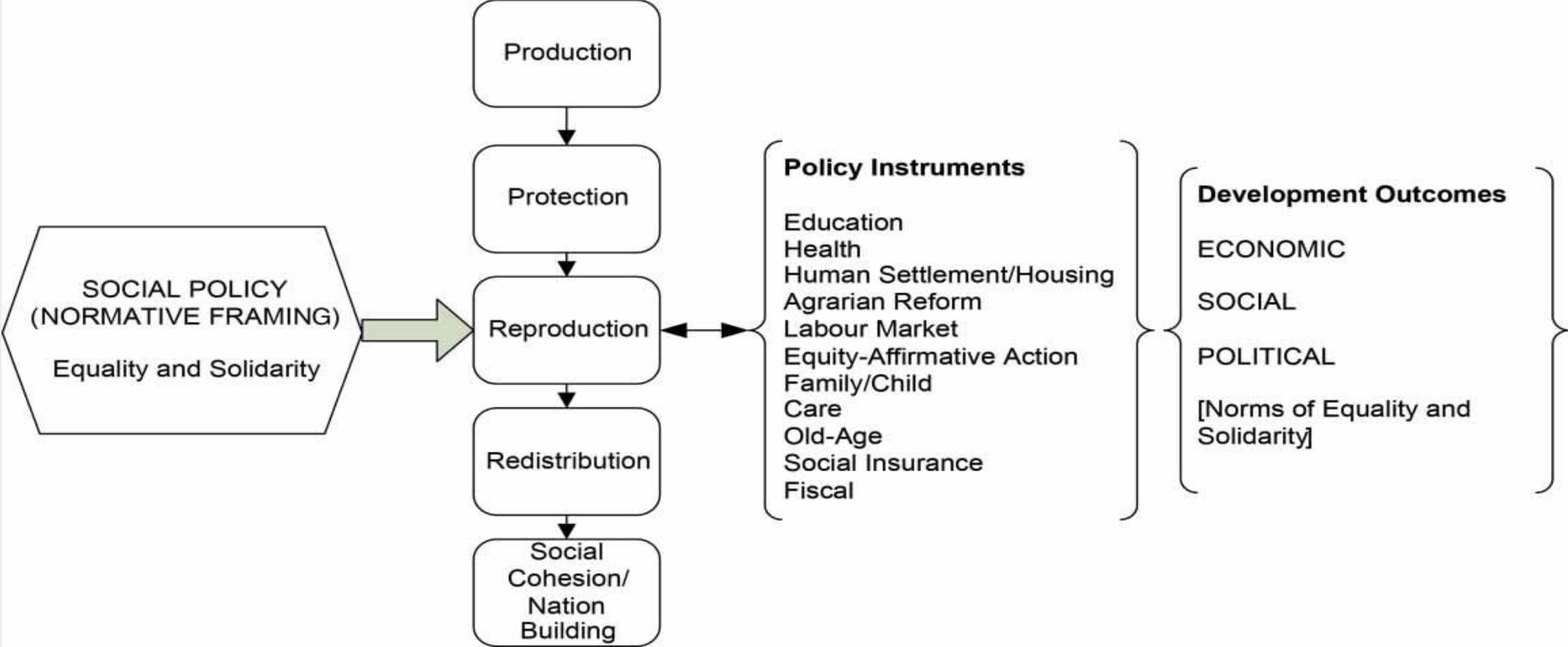
Transformative social policy: securing social rights for older women

- Current provisions like cash transfer may provide relief, godsend– but they only subsidize the state’s failure to provide basic services, effects ephemeral (Lloyd-Sherlock 2014)
- Poverty is structural – cash proponents ignore this and structures poverty as individualist
- Cash transfers rooted on neoliberal economic systems, individuals culpability in he the market, residual approach, fails to link poverty to broader social, political and economic structures - leads to loss of social rights (Haarstad 2011, UNRISD 2006)
- Need to move towards a more universally oriented policy regime build on shared interests between classes and social groups by creating a foundation for solidarity and coalition between classes and groups

Transformative social policy

- Transformative social policy (Adesina 2011, Hujo 2014, Mkandawire 2004 , UNRISD 2006, Yi 2015)
- Based on:
 - *Recognition of the multiple roles/ function of social policy – production, protection, reproduction, redistribution, social cohesion*
 - *Inherent connect of economic and social policies*
 - *Diversity of instrument s in the social policy regime*
 - *Wider vision of human wellbeing and capability embedded in transformative social policy*

Transformative Social Policy



Adapted from Adesina 2011

■ Way forward:

- *Interclass solidarity, universal, broad linkages with political, social and economic structures (Dhemba 2012, Adesina 2014, Haarstad 2011, UNRISD 2006, Lloyd-Sherlock 2014)*