



PRESS RELEASE

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INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR OLDER PERSONS COMMEMORATED WITH CASH GRANTS FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

Kampala, October 1st, 2011: Today, Uganda joined the rest of the world to commemorate the International Day for Older persons with calls for various players to pay attention to issues that affect older persons in the country. At the same event President Yoweri Museveni who was represented by the Vice President Edward Ssekandi launched the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE).

In the speech read by Vice President Ssekandi, in Kyenjojo district headquarters where the national celebrations took place, President Museveni said that although Uganda has a rich tradition of supporting older people, the country's cultural setting is changing. As a result, many older people cannot be sure of receiving the level of support they once expected.

He said, "The NRM Government recognizes that as people reach old age, basic income security is critical to older people's well-being, dignity and their continued participation in the social and economic development of their communities."

Globally, this day is used to draw the attention of the national and international community on issues that affect older persons. The day was designated by the United Nations General Assembly on 14 December 1990.

In Uganda the day was commemorated under the theme, "Social protection: A pre-requisite for empowering older persons."

Minister of Gender, Labour & Social Development Syda Bbumba said older persons are vulnerable to food insecurity, poor nutrition and poor health. She said that existing social security schemes cover only people who worked in Government and the formal private sector and that where informal social security mechanisms exist, they are under stress due to changing attitudes, economic change and poverty.

Senior Citizens Grants and other forms of social protection programmes are now recognised all over the world as a critical component of national development strategies and key to achieving all inclusive, equitable development and social transformation.

The Social Assistance Grants are being implemented under the Expanding Social Protection Programme supported by DFID, Irish Aid, UNICEF and the Government of Uganda.

Jane Rinthoul, Head of Office DFID in Kampala said” The launch of the SAGE programme is a critical moment as Uganda moves towards the status of a middle income country, where growth is sustained and the most vulnerable people are protected from chronic poverty. The cash transfer will help ensure that vulnerable people and their dependents, often including grandchildren, can access adequate food, education and health care to contribute to Uganda’s development.”

Under the SAGE scheme senior citizens in 14 pilot districts will receive monthly grants of Ugx 23,000 per month through mobile money.

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Note to the editors:

- SAGE is a component of the Expanding Social Protection Programme (ESP) supported by the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID), Irish Aid and UNICEF.
- SAGE is being piloted in 14 districts of Apac, Kole, Amudat, Moroto, Nakapiripirit, Napak, Kiboga, Kyankwanzi, Katakwi, Kyegegwa, Kaberamaido, Kyenjojo, Nebbi and Zombo.
- Over the next 5 years, the programme will give Ugx23, 000 (US\$8) every month to over 600,000 people under two types of grants; the Senior Citizens Grants (for people 65 years and above; 60 and above for Karomoja) and the Vulnerable Families Support Grants (for households with low labour capacity and high dependency).This amount will however be revised to cater for inflation in order to keep the value of the amount.
- As a pilot project, SAGE is aimed at generating evidence and testing mechanisms, principles to support the formulation of the social protection policy framework in Uganda so that social protection is expanded to the whole country.