

From the Editor

Welcome to the first issue of our Newsletter in 2013.

As always since the last edition, a lot of proverbial water has gone under the bridge. First, we welcome the new Minister of Gender, Labour & Social Development, Hon. Eng. John Nasasira who took up his new role recently.

As far as programme implementation goes, there has been substantial ground gained in terms of ensuring that all qualifying beneficiaries are registered and brought on board to receive the grants. As of March (2013), we had 70,150 people receiving grants. We hope that by June this year, the remaining sub counties will be covered, bringing on board about 25,000 more beneficiaries.

On the policy side, a draft policy framework is already in place. Consultations are going on with various partners and stakeholders in efforts to finalise the policy. Once finalised, it will guide the building of a comprehensive social protection system for Uganda. It will also guide, inform and bring greater coherence to social protection programming in the country.

In this issue, we speak with the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development who is the technical overseer of the ESP Programme to sound her out on progress, lessons, learnt and challenges.

We also bring stories of just four of our beneficiaries. Needless to say, we have thousands of beneficiaries who are beginning to testify how the UGX. 24,000 they receive every month is changing their lives.

Of course don't forget to drop us a line to share your comment.

Good reading.
Editor

SAGE now reaches 70,000 beneficiaries, paying out Ushs 1.8b monthly

By Phionah Kesaasi & Pius Ongom

Sixty five year old Sipola Asio has been restricted to a wheel chair for a long time. With no husband and the death of her two children, Sipola is living with a grandchild who helps her to get food from neighbours in exchange for providing labour on their gardens.

A resident of Getom village, in Katakwi Sub county, Katakwi district, Sipola's life in old age, worsened by disability, has been full of misery.

But since she started receiving the Senior Citizens Grants, her life is beginning to change. "When I got the money I bought two basins of groundnuts which I planted, from which I harvested two bags." She says, "I have also been able to buy a mattress, a mosquito

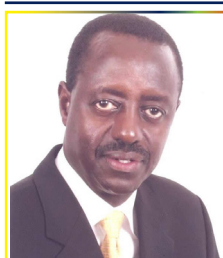
...(Continued on page 2)



Rt. Hon. Prime Minister, Amama Mbabazi, 3rd left, makes the first payment of the Senior Citizens Grant in Kyankwanzi district in October 2012

Hon. Nasasira underscores the value of social protection in NDP

By John Mpande



Hon. John Nasasira

The Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Hon. Eng. John Nasasira has said social protection and Direct Income Support is a critical intervention for Uganda to

achieve the objectives of the National Development Plan and those of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) manifesto.

The Minister made the

...(Continued on page 2)

... (Continued from page 1)

SAGE now reaches 70,150 beneficiaries

net and a pair of bed sheets," adding that her nutrition has greatly improved, "if we eat meat today, the next day fish and the other day greens."

Sipola is just one of the thousands of older persons whose lives have been changed by the grants under the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE). Under the scheme, beneficiaries receive UGX 24,000 (2012 value) per month. There are currently two types of grants being piloted; the Senior Citizens Grant (SCG) which targets people who are 65 years and above (60 years in Karamoja) and the Vulnerable Family Grant (VFG) targeting households with low labour capacity. This amount is revised annually to cater for inflation.

Since the start of the scheme in just three sub counties in three districts in September 2011, the number of beneficiaries has steadily risen from 2,758 to 70,150, disbursing a total amount of UGX.11.6 billion in 97 sub counties across the 14 pilot districts. It is estimated that enrolment of approximately 25,500 additional beneficiaries from the remaining sub counties will be completed by June 2013. The 14 pilot districts are Apac, Kole, Amudat, Moroto, Nakapiripirit, Napak, Kiboga, Kyankwanzi, Katakwi, Kyegegwa, Kaberamaido, Kyenjojo, Nebbi and Zombo.

The grants have especially been a big relief to elderly women who find themselves widowed and having orphans to take care of. A study, *"The Gender Situational Analysis (2012)"* commissioned by ESP and done by Development Pathways clearly articulates the plight of elderly women in shouldering the responsibility of providing for households yet many times this is worsened by physical disability.

"Fifty five per cent of the elderly are women yet illiteracy, disability and loss of spouses is high among females than their male counterparts," reads part of the report.

It is therefore not surprising that out of the 70,150 beneficiaries (under both the Senior Citizens Grants and Vulnerable Family Grants); 44,800 are female, while 25,350 are male. This represents a percentage of 63.9, and 36.1 per cent respectively.

Specifically, the female beneficiaries of



Sipola Asio

the Senior Citizens Grants are 34,496, and those receiving the Vulnerable Family Grants (VFG) are 10,304. The male recipients of the Senior Citizens Grants on the other hand are 23,471 and while those under the Vulnerable Family Grants are 1,879.

Evidence emerging from the pilot districts indicates that after just 15 payment cycles of the grants, some older and vulnerable people who had previously been abandoned reported seeing their family members getting closer to them because they are no longer seen as a "burden".

Preliminary findings by a UKaid study; *"Transforming Cash Transfers: Beneficiary and community perception of the Senior Citizens Grant in Uganda (2012)"* shows beneficiaries have gained a reasonable level of financial independence. This has granted them economic security, freedom of expenditure and the ability to meet their own needs.

The study further reveals that the well-being of the beneficiaries and their families is improving. The grants have become a reliable and dependable source of income for both short and long term investments.

Experience from all over the world shows that providing income security to the poor and vulnerable people through small, regular, predictable transfers of money is a critical strategy and key to achieving inclusive, pro-poor, equitable development.

It is hoped that the success of the SAGE pilot Programme will generate impact and provide an opportunity to learn how Direct Income Support can be most effectively implemented in Uganda's context. ■

... (Continued from page 1)

Nasasira underscores

remarks while meeting staff of the Social Protection Secretariat in which the Programme was introduced to him.

The meeting was attended by the Minister of State, Disability & Elderly Affairs, Hon. Sulaiman Madada, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry Mrs. Christine Guwatudde Kintu and the Director of Social Protection, Mr. Herbert Baryayebwa. Ms. Harriet Luyima, Director (Labour), Ms. Jane Mpigi Sanyu, Director Gender, Mr. Daniel Mugulusi, Under Secretary Finance & Administration and Mr. John Okiror, Acting Assistant Commissioner, Planning also attended the meeting.

During the meeting, Hon. Nasasira was briefed on the implementation progress of the Expanding Social Protection (ESP) Programme which falls under the Directorate of Social Protection in the Ministry.

The Minister was given an overview of the ESP Programme covering its objectives, purpose, administrative arrangements, and implementation status of both policy and Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment (SAGE) as well as challenges and the road map for the remaining period for the pilot Programme.

The Minister observed that the Programme represents a new and innovative strategy through which the Government of Uganda can directly reach its most vulnerable citizens. He said the Programme is an effective tool for Government to directly improve services to the citizens and empower them for their continued participation in the social and economic development of their own lives and communities in a dignified manner.

The Minister promised his support to ensure the Programme is implemented as planned and rolled out to cover the entire country. He however stressed the importance of making the good Programme known to decision makers. He said the benefits and impact on the population and the economy should be well packaged and shared widely among decision makers. ■

See also story on pg.5

For Babinyanga (88) and Kabajungu(70) the grants put a roof over their head-literally

By Micheal Musiime

Samuel Babinyanga is 88 years old and has been married to Maga Kabajungu (70) for the last 32 years. The two beneficiaries of the Senior Citizens Grants reside in Kijanga village, Kitega Parish in Bufunjo Sub county, Kyenjojo district.

At their home, one vividly sees the challenging conditions that the aging couple live in.

Before the Direct Income Support intervention, the couple lived in their old grass thatched house and survived on food produced in their garden.

"We are advanced in age and we do not have the energy to keep replacing the grass on our roof so that it doesn't leak when it rains" says Babinyanga as he explains the challenges they faced.

"We use the little money we get from weaving (baskets and mats) to meet some

or our basic needs such as salt and soap..." adds Maga.

As a couple, the two agreed to use the grants to improve their house. With local materials like reeds, trees for timber and mud available, roofing (Iron sheets) was the hurdle to overcome. They hence decided to buy one iron sheet between the two of them, every payment cycle. The old couple has also invested in livestock by buying two piglets.

As a result, the couple has been able to plug one of their most disturbing conditions; replacing their grass roof with iron sheets thereby addressing the hitherto menacing challenge of having to replace their roof every so often. Today they have realized their dream of leaving the grass thatched house for a semi-permanent one.

The two, living with their 13 year old grandson, whom they provide scholastic



Babinyanga in front of his new house

materials for for him to attend Universal Primary Education school, plan to improve the finishing of their house in future and also buy some goats to rear for income security.

"We are grateful to the Government for having thought about us, but it would be good if the government considered increasing the grant value so that we can do much more," Babinyanga says. ■

For Rupe, the grants came in time to save her orphaned grandchild

By Clement Okweny



Anna Rupe in front of her house, carrying baby Margaret

Eight kilometres off Lolachat Subcounty headquarter lies Moruangamion village in Natirae parish, Pian county in Nakapiripirit district. We are in Moruangamion to visit Anna Rupe at her Manyatta (traditional Karimojong communal settlement). Grandma Anna doesn't know her exact age, but she estimates that she was born at the beginning of the Second World War (which makes her about 75).

At her age, Rupe finds herself with a

burden of 9 dependents; 4 of whom orphaned by the death of both her younger co-wife and her husband, while the others orphaned grandchildren, following the death of her own children. The youngest among the dependants in her care is one year old Margret Nakuwam. Margret's mother died in April (2012). All the children are still young, the oldest being 14 years. All of them solely depend on ageing Rupe for food, medical care and all other needs. Her biggest challenge has been providing food and medication to the one year old granddaughter. In the past, Margret survived purely on assistance from the nearby Health Center which provided plump nuts for her nutrition.

"When I got my first pay (from SAGE) in May 2012, it was such a big relief for me. With that money, now I am assured I have something to begin from every month,

from it I buy some food for the children, I can take the youngest one (Margaret) to the Health Unit when she falls sick, I am able to buy for her some milk, rice, occasionally some meat and flour which I use to make porridge which I then mix with the plump nuts for Margret."

Rupe's future plan is to buy and stock some grains. In her own words, "The rains washed away most of the crops from the gardens, my granaries over there are empty, the whole village has no food, you need to buy now for the future from those who bring from Sironko, or Mbale."

"I thank the Government for this support, life is hard for me and the children, but without this support, it would definitely be unbearable. I pray for the continuity of the programme for many more years," she concludes. ■

The Grants enable Namatovu to access medical care

By Lenox Ayesiga

Christine Namatovu is aged 65 years. She lives in Lwamagali Village, Kikoma parish, Butemba Sub county in Kyankwanzi district; where she has lived for the last 20 years. She had only one child who unfortunately died before the age of one and she never gave birth again. Namatovu lives with her mother Roy Nabukalu who at 80 years is also a beneficiary of the Senior Citizens Grants.

For the last three years, Namatovu has been struggling with High Blood Pressure. Before, it was difficult for her to get around with basic necessities for herself and her mother. She also lived in a house with a leaking roof. Her income mainly came from selling a local banana type 'musa' to people brewing local brew (*mwenge bigere*) from which she earned about UGX 20,000 - which went to cater for her basic needs.

Unfortunately, her banana plantation was attacked by the menacing Banana Bacterial Wilt (BBW) rendering her highly vulnerable without any source of reliable income.

Fortunately for her, the SAGE Programme started at that point.

As beneficiaries of the Senior Citizens Grant, Namatovu together with her mother have reliably and predictably received UGX. 48,000 monthly, since July 2012. With the money, she says, she is able to buy food, paraffin and salt. The money has also enabled her to access medical care for the basic management of her High Blood Pressure at Kiboga hospital, a distance away from her home. She says that much as she has lived with the condition for sometime, she was not in the past able to pay/go for her regular medical treatment since she did not have the money. "With the SAGE grants, at least am assured of payment for my medical bills."

With two month saving, Namatovu was also able to buy a blanket at UGX 28,000 and 2 chickens at UGX 10,000. She plans to save her money so that she can hire labourers to cultivate her garden to grow



Christine Namatovu

maize, potatoes and beans in the next season.

Beyond herself, Namatovu says, "Senior Citizens Grants have grown business in the community because we old people after we receive the money, we buy commodities from the nearby trading center." She adds, "You see if it was not for these grants, my mother would be a burden to me in my condition." ■

We now have pride in ourselves as old people

By Elly Aswa



Rev. Okoku and his wife at their home

For many beneficiaries of the Senior Citizens Grants scheme, it is just enough that a regular, predictable source of income gives them income security- that confidence that even if say, they or a member of their households falls sick next month, they have a source of income to bank on, to access basic medical services. Beyond the benefits that individuals are seeing in their own lives, we are increasingly seeing that beneficiaries are re-connecting with their communities, building social capital and networks.

In Zombo district, a group of 18 old people-all of them beneficiaries of the SAGE scheme have come together to form an association. Under the Association, they save money monthly, as they receive their regular Direct Income Support. They also meet as a group to share ideas on issues that affect them as old people.

The Rev Joram Okoku, 75, a retired priest, a member and the group's secretary said, "Through the association, which these grants enabled us to form, we come together to share our challenges and issues about our lives."

"Before, we started receiving these grants, many older people feared to come out of their homes because we were seen as a "problem", so we were avoided and ignored. Today we all have the same source of income that has united us. Many of us older people, shied away from associating even amongst ourselves, but now we have all come out."

He further narrates, "in our group every member saves UGX.1,000/= during our monthly meetings which take place either immediately after we receive our payments or the next day. This money is given out in form of loans to members who need it. The loan is then paid at the end of the month with an interest of 10 percent. This has helped the savings to increase. It has also helped some of our members to meet some of their needs that require more than UGX.24,000/= which we get at the beginning of every month."

He says they intend to transform their group into a village savings and loans association where all members of the community (including non-SAGE beneficiaries) can join to save to improve the welfare of the entire community.

"Through this group savings, some of us plan to acquire assets like bicycles and radios," Rev. Okoku says. ■

Nebbi RDC Commends SAGE

By Nickson Olama & Phionah Kesaasi

The Nebbi Resident District Commissioner Ms Betty Adima has commended the introduction and implementation of the Senior Citizens Grants in the district which, she says, is helping to address poverty among the most vulnerable people in the district.

"Evidently, SAGE is helping to improve people's lives and has created a sense of independence among them. Thanks to these grants, today many of the beneficiaries can afford essential needs like soap, salt, food which has enabled them live a better life and it has empowered them to feel independent because they no longer need to beg from well-wishers any more," she said.

Ms. Adima made these remarks while opening a workshop organised by the Community Services Department, Nebbi district at Goli Women centre. The workshop that brought together media practitioners, civil society organisations, representatives of cultural and religious leaders in the district as well as officials from the local government, was intended to build a strong partnership for Programme implementation by briefing

the different actors on the progress of implementation of the SAGE Programme and clarify roles of the various partners. It was also meant to provide information to the various partners so that they, in turn, can educate the wider public on the Programme; its implementation modality and progress to avoid misinformation in the public.

Ms. Adima narrated an experience where she interacted with one of the SAGE beneficiaries.

"I recently met an old man, when I asked if he was registered for SAGE Programme, he told to me (President) Museveni has brought for us salary. So I want to live a good life so that I enjoy my salary. "When I asked him how he would lead a good life he said he will stop drinking alcohol."

In his closing remarks, the Chief Administrative Officer, Mr. Seraphine Alia, said the media was an important channel that would help in voicing the gospel of SAGE and promised to work with them closely by availing them with all the necessary information regarding implementation progress. ■

Mass Birth, Death Registration done in 8 districts

By Sam Acodu

In a bid to fulfil its mandate, Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB) in partnership with the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) and in collaboration with the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE) carried out mass birth registration in eight pilot districts of Katakwi, Kaberamaido, Kiboga, Kyenjojo, Apac, Nebbi, Moroto and Nakapiripirit. These are also some of the pilot districts for the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE).

In Uganda by law, the Sub county Chiefs, Town Clerks and Hospital Administrators are the local registrars, while the office of the Registrar General is the government department responsible for Birth and Death Registration.

The purpose of the BDR initiative was to promote the right of all Ugandans to an identity through strengthening and expanding decentralized births and deaths registration services in Uganda.

In addition, it provided an opportunity to all Ugandans in the pilot districts to be registered and acquire a free short birth certificate.

To facilitate the exercise, a number of activities were carried out including; conducting capacity building training sessions for the Trainer of trainers (TOT), district teams and the sub counties staff who are responsible for cascading and managing the various trainings and supervising house hold registration exercise in their respective districts and sub counties. ■

Minister visits SAGE in Kiboga district

As part of his orientation to the Programme, the new Minister of Gender, Labour & Social Development, Hon. Eng. John Nasasira on April 4, visited Kiboga Sub county in Kiboga district to see how the Programme is working in the area. He was accompanied by Hon. Sulaiman Madada, Minister of State for Disability & Elderly Affairs, Hon. Ruth Nankabirwa Minister of State for Fisheries and also Woman MP for Kiboga district, Hon. James Kabajo Kyewalabye, Member of Parliament Kiboga County East.

The Minister was also accompanied by a high level delegation of the technical staff led by the Permanent Secretary, Ms Christine Guwatudde Kintu and included the Director Social Protection Mr. Herbert Baryayebwa, Director Gender and Community Development, Ms. Jane Mpagi, the Under Secretary Finance & Administration, Mr. Daniel Mugulusi and the Head Social Protection Secretariat, Mr. Stephen Kasaija, among others.

The Minister praised the Kiboga district team comprising of the LCV Chairperson Mr. Israel Yiga, the Resident District Commissioner, Mr. Kule Muranga, the Chief Administrative Officer Ms. Roselyne Odong, the Community Development Officers and the Programme staff for the good work they have done in implementing and supervising the Programme in the district.

In Kiboga Sub county headquarters the Minister met with several beneficiaries who voiced various challenges they faced in accessing the grants such as long distances they travel to the pay points, missing payments and poor network since the money is paid using mobile money.

The Minister said the Programme is an NRM Manifesto commitment to the older persons and he is committed to seeing that the delivery of the grants is improved so that beneficiaries receive their grants with the least inconvenience. He instructed the Secretariat staff to ensure that at all times grievances are resolved within two months so that beneficiaries don't have to wait long before their grievances are addressed.

He visited two beneficiaries in their homes. He said he was impressed by the impacts made in the life of the beneficiaries and would champion the expansion of the Programme to the whole country. ■

We have built enough capacity to upscale

The Permanent Secretary (PS) Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development is the overall supervisor of the Expanding Social Protection Programme. The Head of Secretariat manages the Programme on a day to day basis. In this two part interview with Simon Omoding, the PS, Mrs. Christine Guwatudde Kintu, sets the context of the Programme, while Stephen Kasaijja, Head of Secretariat discusses the progress in implementation.



Mrs. Christine Guwatudde Kintu

Could you start by explaining to the readers what the relationship is, between the Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development with the Senior Citizens Grants and the Expanding Social Protection Programme?

This is a ministry programme. But let me start by giving you the bigger picture. Social protection is concerned with measures to ensure an adequate, acceptable standard of living for all citizens. In fact, today it is recognised all over the world as a critical mechanism to address vulnerability to poverty and poverty itself. As a result, social protection is increasingly becoming a critical component of national development strategies for countries that seek to achieve, inclusive, pro-poor, equitable development. Direct Income Support in the form of regular, small transfers of money to vulnerable or excluded citizens is at the core of most national social protection systems. In Uganda, we are piloting the Senior Citizens Grants and Vulnerable Family Grants.

Uganda's Constitution (1995) commits the state to fulfilling the fundamental rights of all Ugandans to social justice and economic development and to ensuring

that all Ugandans enjoy basic rights and opportunities. It also commits the state to ensuring welfare of the aged.

Furthermore, the National Development Plan 2010-2015 outlines objectives for expanding social protection to reduce vulnerability and enhance productivity of the country's human resource.

As you know, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development is the Government's leading and coordinating agency for the Social Development Sector. The Ministry is responsible for community empowerment, protection and promotion of the rights and needs of the vulnerable groups and gender responsive development.

Since 2006, the Ministry has championed efforts to promote social protection in Uganda. These efforts culminated in the design of the ESP Programme which was approved by Government in June 2010.

To come back specifically to your question, the ESP is a Government of Uganda Programme implemented by the Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development. The ministry was involved in the design of the Program and now in its implementation. ESP is not a stand-alone Programme it is a Programme of Government under this Ministry. I oversee the technical implementation of the Programme.

Since the launch of the Programme in September 2011, what key lessons has the Ministry learnt in terms of implementing Direct Income Support programmes to vulnerable groups like the elderly?

I think there are several lessons at various levels. At the national level, one big lesson we have learnt is that it is possible to deliver Direct Income Support, especially to the older persons. Since we started we have put in place structures, systems, guidelines and processes that give us the comfort that now we know how Direct

Income Support could work in Uganda at whatever scale. So it is possible.

Secondly, we have also seen that capacity has been built amongst our staff to deliver programmes like these. The staff of the Ministry are implementing the programme and have acquired immense skill and experience in how Programmes like these work. Besides, the staff directly involved in implementation, there are other staff who have been participating in Programme activities.

At the district level, the Programme has raised the profile of issues affecting older persons. Districts where we are working are today well conscientised on issues of older persons. But also the Programme works with local government staff right from the districts to the Parish chiefs at the local level. All these people have gained skills in running Programmes like these. Because the Programme is not just about sending money to beneficiaries; it is about all the other dynamics that come with it such as registration of beneficiaries, payments by mobile money, addressing grievances, all this is a huge learning for us and the districts.

More specifically on capacity building, how has this been done by the Ministry?

Leadership capacities at various levels, for implementing this programme has been built. Right from the Ministry to the districts and the lower levels, we have done a lot of training for different stakeholders both in government and outside for purposes of effective implementation and monitoring of the Programme. In the wider government, we have trained people across all Ministries. We have a special course conducted by the Economic Policy Research Institute based in Cape Town, South Africa which is one of the best in the region in this area. We have sent about 50 officers from Permanent Secretaries, Directors, Commissioners, assistant Commissioners and others to attend this important and

e Direct Income Support Programmes

foundational course for social transfers. Last year we also conducted a Uganda tailored course of that nature here in Uganda where we attracted and trained over 30 officers from different Ministries of Government.

We have also done study tours for our political leaders- MPs and Ministers to other countries to see what is being done there. Ministers and MPs have been to South Africa, Lesotho, Kenya, Brazil and other places so that they see for themselves how and what those countries are doing. But in short, we have done a lot to build both the political and technical capacities at various levels to deliver Programmes like these.

The Programme is still in its initial 5 years pilot phase but we have been seeing in the media calls from especially senior citizens in areas that have not yet been covered to have the Programme extended to their areas as well. What are the plans to cover the whole country? Can the Government afford it?

The Programme has done so well in areas where we are implementing. Because of that the public demand was expected; we knew it was coming. At the moment we are in 14 districts of Kiboga, Kyankwanzi, Kyenjojo, Kyegegwa, Katakwi, Kaberamaido, Napak, Moroto, Amudat, Nakapairipirit, Apac, Kole, Nebbi and Zombo.

We know that Government at the moment may have financial challenges, but there is commitment and political will to expand the Programme. What we have therefore done is to make a

roll out plan. In our plan for example, we know that if government committed an additional UGX. 35 billion in the financial year 2013/14, we would be able to extend the Programme to another 24 districts. The rest of the districts can then be brought on board in a phased way over the next 4 years. The most important thing to note is that this Programme is really affordable. At full roll out, government would only need about 2.4 per cent of the National budget. If you compare that to education that takes 16 per cent, it is really affordable. Plus if you look at the benefits that this Programme is bringing to the lives of the individuals and communities, the impact is immense. Government is aware of the importance of investing in its people. We are also talking about inclusion and being pro-people in our development agenda. As we focus on physical infrastructure, we also need to invest in our human infrastructure.

Has the recent freeze of funding from development partners affected the implementation of the Programme? What has the Ministry done to resolve these challenges, if any?

I would say, yes and no. No, because the core objective of disbursing grants to beneficiaries remains uninterrupted; we have continued to pay our beneficiaries every month. I would like to thank DFID/ UKaid and Irish Aid for the effort they put in to ensuring that we continued regular payments. That has not not been affected by the freeze.

I say Yes, because we were affected in areas where government systems and

structures were used in implementation. The freeze affected Government implementation modalities here at the Ministry and at the local Government level. We have had to put in place other mechanisms outside Government to continue running the Programme. In the meantime we are losing on learning and firming our institutions and systems for implementation. Our capacity development is interrupted.

In terms of what we are doing to address this issue, it is not really the role of the Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development. This is the role of the entire Government and this has been handled as Government. As you might know, Government has been engaged with development partners on how to resolve this matter. Agreement has been made in terms of what Government needs to do to strengthen its internal controls in financial management. On the whole, I can say that Government is engaged with development partners to resolve this issue as soon as possible.

What is your message to implementing district in regard to the freeze?

This is a nascent Programme, it needs to be nursed. I urge the Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) and their teams to continue their support, administrative and technical oversight to ensure that problems that arise are rectified. The CDOs should continue to deliver on those areas they are charged with. The financial freeze notwithstanding, we need continuity; we need to continue serving the senior citizens of this country. So our commitment and support to this Programme should not waiver. ■

And we have made good progress in implementation



Mr. Stephen Kasaija

What is the progress of implementation to date in terms of numbers of beneficiaries, sub counties and districts covered? How would you rate this progress?

Following intensive preparations that started in early 2010, the Programme

began giving out grants in September 2011. At that time we started with two sub counties in each of the initial three districts of Kiboga, Kaberamaido and Kyenjojo. Then we reached only 2,758 beneficiaries. Over the months we have been progressively growing the numbers by bringing on board new beneficiaries

...(Continued on page 8)

... (Continued from page 7)

We have made good progress in implementation

in new sub counties. As we speak (March 2013), we have in total 70,150 beneficiaries spread across all our 14 pilot districts.

To date we are giving grants in 97 sub counties of the 131 sub counties of the 14 districts. But we hope to roll out to all the remaining sub counties by June (2013). Since September 2011, we have disbursed a total of UGX.11.6 billion. Today every month, we pay out just over UGX.1.8 billion to the beneficiaries.

Rating the progress? I would say it has been highly successful; the beneficiaries are happy and all the implementation partners are impressed.

What are the plans to cover the remaining sub counties?

Currently, we are remaining with 33 sub counties spread in 6 districts. In March (2013) alone, we overshot our target of bringing on board 44 sub counties by 22; that means in March alone we brought on board some new 66 sub counties. Our plan is that by June (2013) all the sub counties will have been covered; bringing the number of beneficiaries to about 95,000. At the moment we are moving on to enrol and register the remaining sub counties which will receive their first grants by June.

What would you point to as the main achievements of the Programme in the last 2 years, both at the Policy side and the SAGE side?

The Policy stream of the Programme is responsible for putting in place a policy framework for the country that will govern social protection in general but Direct Income Support provision, specifically. In this area, we have come a long way, when we started two years ago, people even didn't know what social protection is. Today we have managed to define social protection so now people more-or-less have the same understanding when we talk about social protection in the Ugandan context. We have also developed a draft social protection policy framework. At the moment consultations are on-going with the different actors and partners like Ministries, Departments and Agencies of government such as the Ministry of Public Service, National Planning Authority, Office of the Prime



Ministers and MPs speak to a beneficiary in Kaberamaido

Minister, local governments and other partners.

When the policy is agreed on, it will create a comprehensive and common vision for social protection in Uganda; so that all the other related policies can talk to the common vision. We have also done lots of studies to support the policy formulation exercise such as the cost and affordability study, poverty and vulnerability, among many others. Findings from these studies help us to provide evidence for our positions and recommendations in our policy work.

The SAGE stream of the Programme is responsible for delivery of the grants. In this regard, we have achieved a lot by way of putting in place systems; such as registration, cash delivery, registration and grievance management systems. We procured a payment service provider, all of which we didn't have at the start but we now have them up and running effectively.

From the implementation so far, what are some of the emerging impacts in the lives of individuals and the communities?

There are a number of impacts that we can already observe in the life of the community and various surveys and studies are beginning to document these. First, we are seeing people becoming increasingly empowered. Older people who prior to the Programme lived in very despicable situations, with no income security and power to buy anything now have that power. As a result beneficiaries are reporting that these grants are enabling them to buy things as basic as

descent clothing. With descent clothing they now can go to church or attend community meetings. People are getting re-connected to their communities.

The beneficiaries previously seen in their communities as dependants are beginning to contribute to the well-being of the families and the communities. This way, the people are regaining their self-worth and the communities are appreciating them once again.

The other impacts are in nutrition, improved livelihoods, investments, access to services like medical and education and improved business in the localities. In terms of nutrition, people are reporting that with the grants, they are able to buy more and better food, and so they are eating more nutritious and bigger portions of food. Ultimately, this leads to improved nutrition and health of the community-and hopefully will translate into more productivity. The beneficiaries are also reporting that their livelihoods are changing; from people who had no source of income, to receiving a regular and predictable income (income security) people are able to get items they need on credit, let alone being able to afford basic needs in their lives. Some beneficiaries have invested their grants and are already beginning to earn dividends from their investment.

Different beneficiaries have invested in many different ways. Beneficiaries who live and take care of orphaned children are also reporting that now they are able to send and keep children at school because they can afford to buy scholastic materials, which was the main reason children were sent back home from UPE schools.

At the community level, because of the amounts of money we inject into the locations, businesses are doing well. The turnover for stocks in the local shops is up, because sections of the communities that were previously not consumers, now have the purchasing power. There is an improvement in demand and supply of locally produced goods and services-in a sense stimulation of the local economies. ■

Can Uganda afford not to invest in social protection?

By David Lambert Tumwesigye

Despite Uganda's consistent economic growth and a reduction in poverty, more than 7.5 million Ugandans still live below the poverty line. Many more people live just above the poverty line and are therefore insecure and vulnerable to relapsing to poverty given the prevalence of agro-climatic and health related shocks.

Social protection is now globally recognised as a critical component of national development and key to achieving inclusive, pro-poor, equitable development. Social Protection through instruments such as direct income support directly reduces poverty and inequality. It also supports excluded citizens to access services, provides a foundation on which to build productive livelihoods and enables them to live a life of security and dignity.

The most recent World Bank Africa Social Protection Strategy 2012-2022 is among the latest to acknowledge and highlight this strategic role of Social Protection and provides a road map for strengthening Social protection systems in Africa. In fact, the World Bank notes that "... the cost of not protecting poor households from the negative effects of shocks and chronic poverty are very high and last long into the future."

There is robust international evidence to corroborate the emerging evidence from exit surveys and anecdotes from SAGE pilot districts, that small but regular transfers of money to vulnerable or excluded citizens can transform lives. Senior Citizen Grants (SCG) and Vulnerable Family Grants (VFG) have enabled beneficiary families to provide better meals for their households and to take better care of their children's health and educational needs. In addition, beneficiaries are now able to save and make small investments to start productive livelihoods through purchase of livestock, hire of casual labour to till untended land as well as repairing their houses. Indeed, in a recent study conducted in Nebbi and Kaberamaido districts, beneficiaries perceived the SCG to be 'a dependable source for life and livelihood' and considered it "a sign of Government's commitment to meeting their needs." Not surprisingly the SAGE programme has attracted a lot of public support both within and outside the pilot districts and



President Yoweri Museveni at the launch of the Grants in Nebbi. Can Uganda afford not to provide?

calls for the roll out of the programme to new districts. In response to this demand, the Secretariat has started to develop plans for gradually scaling up SAGE, particularly the Senior Citizens Grant.

Can Uganda afford to scale up the SAGE programme?

The development of a comprehensive social protection system is a necessary but complex process that is likely to evolve over the coming years. Based on our experience implementing the SAGE pilot, a Senior Citizens Grant which is socially non-divisive, simple to implement and cost-effective, makes a good starting point for building such a system. Indeed, experience shows that in many countries, such Senior Citizens Grants are often the starting point for national social protection systems.

A Senior Citizens Grant programme is affordable and can be sustained by a growing economy. Uganda's economy continues to grow at an impressive pace with over 70 percent of the national budget now financed from domestic revenue. Indeed, other low income countries such

as Lesotho and Nepal have successfully delivered domestically financed social protection programmes.

Preliminary estimates from a Cost and Financing Options study and micro simulation by the Social Protection Secretariat show that a national Senior Citizens Grant for those aged 65 years and above would cost 2.2 per cent of the government budget (about 0.42 per cent of GDP) at full scale. This compares well to 8.1 per cent of the budget spent on the health sector and 16 per cent on education. These estimates are consistent with regional studies by the International Labour Office and the World Bank which show that national coverage can be achieved at a cost of 1 to 2 per cent of GDP. Judged by this standard, the Senior Citizens Grant would be one of the most affordable social protection interventions in the world. Indeed, the study estimates that the national roll out of the Senior Citizens Grant can be fully financed from projected increases in government revenue. It would take a maximum 6.88 per cent of the annual revenue increase (in 2017/18), and settles to 2.1% of revenue increases after

...(Continued on page 10)

Senior Citizens Grants help revitalise social networks-emerging evidence shows

By Jane Namuddu

Evidence emerging from some of the pilot districts in which the Senior Citizens Grants are being implemented is showing that aside from addressing poverty, the grants are helping to revitalise good social practices and networks that previously helped individuals and communities to cope with poverty and vulnerability.

According to the Uganda National Household Survey 2005/06, support from traditional social networks that had previously played a critical role in dealing with effects of major shocks in the lives of individuals and households-such as loss of income or bread winner, drought, epidemics destroying livestock, among others-had faded away in both rural and urban areas.

A study on culture and social protection for the very poor in Uganda conducted by Cross Cultural Foundation of Uganda in 2009, also reported that old traditions of caring for the very poor and vulnerable had been abandoned in Ugandan communities in the face of contemporary challenges like poverty, conflict, displacement and HIV/AIDS.

This resulted into disintegration of social structures and absence of basic



informal networks that could help poor individuals or households to cope with

... (Continued from page 9)

Can Uganda afford not to invest in social protection?

full rollout.

The analysis also shows that national implementation of the Senior Citizens Grant would have significant impacts on poverty: 26 per cent of beneficiary households would be lifted above the poverty line and the poverty gap - a measure of the depth of poverty - among households with over-65s would reduce by 32 per cent, a significant achievement which would benefit around 14 per cent of households nationally.

An Indicative roll out proposal in the table below shows that with an additional UGX 35 billion in the first year, Government could expand coverage of

the Senior Citizens Grant to an additional 24 Districts reaching an additional 218,000 Senior Citizens. With sustained government funding, Government could gradually achieve national scale up within

4 years.

Ultimately, affordability is a political question. Given increasing inequality, the persistence of a section of Ugandan society which is disconnected from Uganda's development process and the well-known impact of today's poverty on tomorrow's generations we might equally ask: can Uganda afford not to invest in social protection? ■

Table -Indicative SAGE roll-out plan

Financial Year	Additional Districts	Cumulative Beneficiaries (EST.)	Budget (billion)
UGX. Bn			
2013/14	24	228,000	UGX 35
2014/15	48	437,000	UGX 108
2015/16	73	664,000	UGX 189
2016/17	98	891,000	UGX 277

shocks thus heightening vulnerabilities. The increased vulnerabilities led to loss of independence, dignity and respect for the poor and vulnerable-especially the aged.

A study on Experiences and Perceptions of the beneficiaries of the Senior Citizens Grant in Uganda conducted by the UK's Overseas Development



Institute (2012) indicated that some of the beneficiaries in Nebbi district felt they are already beginning to restore the informal networks. Informal labour groups that used to support those with low labour capacity- were reported to be back in existence mainly supporting in agriculture.

".....with the UGX. 24,000/= a month, one (beneficiary) can buy a big cock from which they get 12 pieces, 2-3 kgs of flour and a local drink after which they call 8-10 group members to cultivate a selected piece of land or engage in any other activity depending on the interest/ need of the hosting party. After the days' work, group members eat the meal and drink the local brew while sharing ideas and socialising," the District Chairperson, Nebbi district, Mr. Robert Okumu is

quoted as saying in the ODI Report.

Such groups foster community development and social cohesion because they pool labour thereby enhancing labour capacity especially for those who are labour constrained like older people but they also foster interaction and socialising hence enabling hitherto abandoned older people to have a sense of belonging and self-worth in their community.

Evidence is also showing that owing to improving agricultural production among beneficiaries as a result of incomes from the grants, the practice of contributing food items to neighbours during emergencies such as funerals, weddings or other social events are also on the rise again. It was also known that at harvest times, people shared produce with neighbours by sending a basket of maize, heap of cassava, potatoes or ground nuts depending on the harvest. This too had faded away due to poverty and food insecurity. Beneficiaries reported that such norms were beginning to emerge again.

In the past, children paid regular visits to grandparents and in some cases daughters who had children prior to marriage would leave their children with their parents as they go into marriage. This would enable elderly people have grand children around them for support and protection. Grandchildren too were happy to live with grandparents possibly due to good care, love from the grandparents, availability of food and fruits. This however changed gradually with a reduction of grandchildren interested in visiting or living with grandparents.

The 2009 Situational Analysis of Orphans and other Vulnerable Children in Uganda affirmed this by indicating that some of the children who went to the streets during that time had run away from grandparents. Biting poverty and food insecurity leading to one meal a day and lack of sugar for tea are some of the reasons that led to the declining relations between children and their grandparents. Emerging evidence from the SAGE beneficiaries however indicates that with assured income among the elderly, some grand children have now started returning to live with their grandparents as noted by both beneficiaries and local leaders.

".....With SAGE, my grandchildren who had stopped living with me are now back. I can afford to give them food every day and sugar for tea. With these children here, I have someone to cook, collect firewood and fetch water for me"-an elderly woman in Nyaravur Sub counties, Nebbi district told the ODI researchers.

Findings from the Client Exit Survey conducted by the Expanding Social Protection Programme reported that 78 per cent of beneficiaries reported having spent their previous payments on food. The same beneficiaries acknowledged that this resulted into having better quality food, eating more frequently and having bigger meals. They observed that this brought back grandchildren who had formerly run away due to lack of or limited food.

The Survey also showed that older persons were reporting investing more in traditional systems that are supportive of their welfare. In the past, it was the role of the parents to support their children in contributing to bride price. Due to poverty, this had reduced with less attention given to this role especially where children are orphans. This was seen as important based on the contribution the bride was to make to the entire family.

This is highlighted by the case of an 80 year old woman who received her money in a lump sum of 156,000/=. She said she was planning to support her grandson to pay bride price. She noted she was doing this because it is the same wife that takes care of her needs including cooking for her, washing her clothes and personal care. She observed that by contributing to the bride price, she would be assured of descent care from her grand-daughter-in-law.

The ODI Report also shows that the Senior Citizens Grants have reduced dependency of the elderly on their children thereby increasing social empowerment as they can make independent decisions.

"Before SAGE, we elderly people were treated like we were dead; but now we are also respected," said an elderly man in Kiboga district during the Client Exit Survey.

"My social relations with my friends have improved because once I get the money, my friends come and we share good moments together," said a 79 year old

About this Newsletter

ESP News is published by The Expanding Social Protection Programme as one of the ways to share information about Direct Income Support under the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE) and social protection, generally, as a development intervention in Uganda.

Editorial Board

Mrs Christine Guwatudde Kintu, PS, MGLSD, Editorial Advisor
Mr. Herbert Baryayebwa, Director, Social Protection, MGLSD, Chairman
Mr. Stephen Kasaija, Head of ESP Programme-Member
Ms. Beatrice Okillan, Policy & Learning Manager, Member
Mr. Stephen Barrett, SAGE Manager, Member
Mr. David L. Tumwesigye, Advocacy Coordinator, Member
Mr. Simon Omoding, Communications Manager, Editor

About The Expanding Social Protection Programme

The Expanding Social Protection (ESP) Programme is a Government of Uganda initiative under the Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development. The development objective of the 5-year Programme is to embed a national social protection system that benefits Uganda's poorest as a core element of the country's national policy, planning and budgeting process.

Disclaimer:

The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of The Expanding Social Protection Programme, Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development or their partners.

Feedback:

For any views and feedback on this newsletter or our work in general, please write to:
The Editor, P.O Box 28240, Kampala; E-mail: esp@socialprotection.go.ug

ESP Programme is funded by UKaid, Irish Aid, UNICEF and the Government of Uganda.



www.socialprotection.go.ug