



**SPEECH BY HON.SYDA N.M. BUMBA, MINISTER OF GENDER, LABOUR AND
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

**AT THE SIGNING OF THE MoUs BETWEEN THE MGLSD, MoLG AND DISTRICT
LOCAL GOVERNMENT FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SOCIAL ASSISTANCE
GRANTS FOR EMPOWERMENT (SAGE) PILOT SCHEME**

VENUE: 8TH FLOOR BOARD ROOM, MGLSD, KAMPALA

DATE: 14 October 2011

TIME: 10.00am

Honourable Ministers,

Honourable Members of Parliament

The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government

The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development

Representatives of DFID, Irish Aid and UNICEF

District Chairpersons

Chief Administrative Officers

Officers of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development

Members of the media

Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen,

It gives me much pleasure to preside over the signing of MoUs between the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, the Ministry of Local Government and the districts of Zombo, Amudat, Kyegegwa, Kyankwanzi, Kole and Napak. It is only two months that I presided over the signing of MoUs with the districts of Moroto, Apac, Nakapiripirit, Katakwi and Nebbi. The fact that we are together again so soon is indicative of the pace of progress now being achieved by this Ministry as it works to roll-out the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE) programme.

Ladies and gentlemen, today is an important day as it represents another major milestone in our collaboration with the ministry of Local Government and the selected District Local Governments in the implementation of the Expanding Social Protection programme. Social Protection is now recognised all over the world as a critical component of national development strategies and key to achieving all inclusive, pro-poor, equitable development and social transformation. It is no coincidence that the countries that have the most well-

developed social protection systems in Africa also exhibit the highest human development indicators and the most dynamic and advanced economies. Moreover, around the world no country has achieved middle income status without significant investment in the social protection systems which are required for building a nation's human capital. From Asia, to Latin America to our own continent, the development of social protection systems is increasingly recognized as both a catalyst and indicator of national development.

The truth of the development challenge is that even if a country is moving forward, development will be unsustainable and ultimately meaningless if a large proportion of the population remains disadvantaged and excluded for one reason or another.

Uganda is no exception to this challenge. Although we have over the years managed to reduce poverty prevalence from 56% nearly 20 years ago, to about 24.5% today, there remains a section of our society that lives in chronic poverty. An even larger section of our society remains at risk of backsliding into poverty as people struggle to cope with a range of economic shocks. I think we all understand what impact the threat of poverty has on our families, our communities and our economy.

Older persons, persons with disabilities, orphans and vulnerable children and the chronically ill are particularly vulnerable. Many of these people cannot afford the basics of life that others take for granted. They live with the belief that their children will not achieve their full potential or get access to the opportunities which could provide them with a route out poverty. They cannot even attend UPE Schools because they cannot buy that one exercise book which the teacher requires at school; they cannot benefit from free medication in the government facility because they can't get that 500 shillings they need

to take a *bodaboda* motorcycle ride to a free of charge government facility. It is therefore no longer realistic or acceptable to expect such individuals to be able to achieve their full potential without support. If we want to achieve the full impact of our investments in health and education, then we also need to ensure that the poor and vulnerable have the means to access these services. The government therefore acknowledges its duty to not only protect such people from destitution but also to provide a platform of economic security from which they themselves can build secure, dignified and productive lives. In doing so we will ensure that even the poorest of the poor in our society are able to access government programmes, participate in and contribute to Uganda's economic transformation and, ultimately live a life of security and dignity.

This is what the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment component of the Expanding Social Protection programme aims to achieve. Evidence from other countries has shown that senior Citizen's Support Grants and Vulnerable Families Support Grants similar to those being implemented under SAGE have significant impacts on poverty, nutrition, access to health and education services, psychosocial status, social inclusion and even local economic development. Through an independent impact evaluation, we hope to show how SAGE is also achieving these objectives in Uganda and make the case for further investment by government and development partners.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me turn my attention to the issue at hand –the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, the Ministry of Local Government and the five district local governments represented here today. I would first like to reflect on the principles set out in the MoU which are to guide the implementation of the SAGE programme and the behavior of the signatories to the MoU, namely: the interdependence of the parties to the MoU; the need for open communication

and joint programming and planning; ownership and incorporation of SAGE into government systems and structures; respect for rights of beneficiaries and promotion of accountability; focus on learning and evidence generation; and commitment to ensuring SAGE will not discriminate according to political affiliation, race, religion, age, sex or ethnicity. Adherence to these principles is absolutely critical to generating the political and public support necessary to achieving sustainability and the expansion of SAGE beyond its preliminary pilot phase.

Amongst the various obligations of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development under this MoU, I would like to specifically acknowledge our responsibility to:

- i. Provide overall strategic leadership and supervision of SAGE implementation
- ii. Build the capacity of local government structures to ensure smooth transition to full government management of the programme in the post pilot phase.

I believe we are already making progress in many of these areas and indeed this Ministry will shortly be announcing the award of a contract to a leading financial services provider for the delivery of SAGE payments to beneficiaries.

The Ministry of Local Government has an equally important role to play in ensuring the successful implementation of SAGE. In keeping with its mandate as provided in the Local Governments Act, I would specifically like to highlight the obligation of the Ministry of Local Government to:

- i. Provide technical support to ensure adherence to national performance standards.

- ii. Ensure the integration of SAGE into the national assessment framework for local governments, and
- iii. Assist in issues of structures, staffing, deployment and grievance resolution for SAGE project districts.

It is important to note that a key objective of the SAGE pilot is to determine an effective, appropriate and sustainable institutional framework for implementing social assistance programmes over the longer-term. I therefore strongly encourage Ministry of Local Government to work with this Ministry to advocate for adequate prioritization of the district Community Services Departments within local governments and to support the full integration of SAGE within local government systems and structures.

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to some of the commitments made by district Local Governments in signing this MoU, namely:

- i. Mainstream SAGE into district plans, budgets and performance management systems.
- ii. Maximise the positive impact of the programme on poor and vulnerable households by establishing appropriate linkages between SAGE and other government and non-governmental development interventions in the district.
- iii. Actively participate in regular district- and national-level programme reviews and learning exercises with a view to informing design refinement.
- iv. Ensure that SAGE operational funds are used efficiently and for the purposes intended.

District local governments are at the forefront of this pilot and your commitment, energy, creativity and professionalism are key to its success. The whole country will be watching your districts over the coming months and decisions on whether SAGE is scaled-up or not beyond the pilot phase in many ways depend on you. I encourage you to engage with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and the Social Protection Secretariat in an open and collaborative manner and work to ensure that the programme rationale, objectives and implementation modalities are properly understood in your districts. I would particularly encourage the District Local Council V Chairpersons to exercise oversight of the programme and ensure that political actors in the districts are properly sensitized to the programme to avoid any mis-understanding or mis-conception

Before I finish I would like to congratulate my technical team for their continued hard work on this programme and extend my sincere appreciation to our development partners, DFID, Irish Aid, UNICEF, for agreeing to support this government-led initiative.

On that final note, I would like to wish the entire SAGE implementation partnership well in its endeavors. I call upon you all to live up to your commitments as specified in these MoUs for the good, not only of the poor and vulnerable in the 14 SAGE pilot districts, but indeed for all Ugandans. Keep in mind that when you succeed, we will be well on our way to ensuring that Prosperity can at last be For All.

With these not few remarks, I thank you once again for turning up for this important function.

Thank you