



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

SPEECH

BY

**HON. SYDA N.M. BBUMBA, MINISTER OF GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

TO COMMEMORATE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR OLDER PERSONS

VENUE: KYENJOJO DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS

DATE: 1ST OCTOBER, 2011

Your Excellency the President of the Republic of Uganda

Hon. Ministers

Members of Parliament

Resident District Commissioners

Local Council V Chairpersons

Development Partners

Religious leaders

Senior Citizens

Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Your Excellency, it gives me much pleasure to welcome you to this most important occasion when we are commemorating International Day for Older Persons. This day was designated by the United Nations in its Resolution No. 45/106 of 14th October 1990.

The purpose of the day is to give an opportunity to countries to create awareness among the public on the needs and rights of older persons as one of the most vulnerable groups.

The theme for this year is ***“Social Protection: A pre-requisite for Empowerment of older persons.”*** This theme has been selected to emphasise the importance of social protection as a key tool for addressing the needs and rights of vulnerable groups including older persons.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is important to note the world population of older persons aged 60 years and above is increasing rapidly. It is projected that the world population of older persons will, by 2050, will be greater than the population of children under 14 years for the first time in history. Half of these older people will be in developing countries such as Uganda.

According to the 2002 Population and Housing Census Report, Uganda had 1,101,039 persons aged 60 years and above and this constituted 4.6% of the total population. The 2009/10 Uganda National Household Survey revealed that this population had

increased to 1,304,464. This population increase has profound consequences at individual, community and National level.

Ladies and gentlemen, resourceful as they are, senior citizens face a lot of challenges. By virtue of their age, older persons are vulnerable to food insecurity, poor nutrition, poor health, epidemics and other calamities. This vulnerability erodes their self-esteem and confidence to the extent that they are isolated and cannot voice their needs and rights. Similarly, older persons are among the poorest of the poor. Micro-finance institutions often leave them out because providers think they are risky borrowers. The existing social security schemes cover only those who worked in Government and the formal private sector. Where the informal social security mechanisms exist, they are under stress due to changing attitudes, economic change and poverty.

Your Excellency, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development is aware of these challenges and measures are being taken to address them. The Ministry developed and launched a National Policy for older persons in 2009 and the National Plan of

Action has been developed to implement this policy. My Ministry has also worked with Local Governments to ensure that the needs of older persons are integrated in their workplans and budgets.

Your Excellency, my Ministry is mandated to empower communities to realize and harness their potential and also provide social protection to the vulnerable groups. 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. 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. 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.

Indeed few, if any, countries have achieved middle income status without significant investment in the social protection systems which are required for building a nation's human capital. 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.

Your Excellency, my Ministry acknowledges its duty to not only protect older people and other vulnerable groups from destitution but also to provide a platform of economic security from which they can build secure, dignified and productive lives. In doing so we will ensure that all members of 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 exactly what the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment – otherwise known as SAGE - aims to achieve. SAGE provides

small, regular grants to senior citizens and other vulnerable persons to help them to meet their basic needs, access Government services and build productive lives. SAGE represents a new innovative way in which the Government of Uganda through the Local Governments is directly reaching the senior citizens 65 years and above and other vulnerable groups. SAGE is being piloted in the 14 districts of Moroto, Napak, Nakapiripirit, Amudat, Katakwi, Kaberamaido, Apac, Kole, Nebbi, Zombo, Kiboga, Kyegegwa and Kyenjojo. By the end of the 5 year pilot period about 95,000 households and approximately 600,000 persons will have been reached. The lessons generated during the pilot will be used to improve on the implementation of the programme and contribute to the development of a national social protection policy framework.

At this point, I would like to extend my appreciation to the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, Irish Aid and UNICEF for supporting this bold initiative. I would like to thank all line Ministries, Civil Society and Faith Based Organisations that are complementing Government efforts in the implementation of the

SAGE Senior Citizens Grant. Finally, I would also like to extend my gratitude to Kyenjojo District for organizing a successful function and congratulate all older persons who have travelled from near and far to participate in the celebration.

Your Excellency, with these remarks I take the honour to invite you to perform a function to officially launch the SAGE Senior Citizens Grant before you address the gathering.

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY.