

**DRAFT SPEECH BY HON.SYDA 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**

8TH FLOOR BOARD ROOM, MGLSD, KAMPALA,

8th July 2011

Honorable Ministers,

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,

Allow me first to welcome all of you to this important function. I also wish to congratulate my technical team for all the hard work that has been done to bring us to this stage and extend my sincere appreciation to our development partners, DFID, Irish Aid, UNICEF for agreeing to support this government-led initiative. This programme was conceptualized during my first term in this Ministry and it gives me great pleasure to be able to preside over the signing of these MoUs as one of my first major public events as the new Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development. I will be following the programme's progress keenly over the coming months and look forward to witnessing the results first hand.

Ladies and gentlemen, today is an important day as it represents a key first step 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.

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 52% nearly 20 years ago, to about 24.5% today, there remains a section of our society that lives in chronic poverty. Many of these people face challenges such as old age, disability, orphanhood, or chronic illness. They cannot even afford the basics of life that others take for granted and are unable to secure their children's futures. Because they are chronically poor, this category of people cannot access government services. 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. An even larger section of our society remains at risk of falling into poverty as they 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.

I think the writing is on the wall for all of us to read. For a long time we have concentrated on the supply side; putting in place policies, programmes and projects with the hope that all Ugandans will benefit. But what we are increasingly seeing is that in spite of all these efforts, there remains a section of Ugandans who need to be helped with the basics of life

to be enabled to benefit from what we have supplied. There is therefore a strong need to address the demand side, so that capacity is created even among the poorest of the poor in society 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 the independent impact evaluation, we hope to show how SAGE is also achieving these objectives and make the case for further investment by government, development partners and the private sector through corporate social responsibility initiatives.

But let me turn my attention to the issue at hand –the MoU between the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, the Ministry of Local Government and the first three district local governments. 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:

1. Provide overall strategic leadership and supervision of SAGE implementation
2. Provide all necessary equipment and funds for SAGE implementation and make quarterly disbursements for local government operations in a timely manner.
3. Supervise the Payment Service Provider (PSP) whilst ensuring that transfers to beneficiaries are made regularly, on time and in full.
4. Select and supervise a Service Provider to conduct a baseline survey and impact assessments to determine the impact of the programme;
5. 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 the MGLSD will shortly be announcing the award of a contract 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:

1. Provide technical support to ensure adherence to national performance standards.
2. Ensure the integration of SAGE into the national assessment framework for local governments, and

3. 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 the Ministry of Gender 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:

1. Mainstream SAGE into district plans, budgets and performance management systems.
2. 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.
3. Actively participate in regular district- and national-level programme reviews and learning exercises with a view to informing design refinement.
4. 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 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-communication.

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. Also mind you that the entire country and the world is watching to see how Uganda performs in this pilot programme. The ball is in your hands to generate the results and evidence that are critical for determining the sustainability and funding of the social protection programme for the entire country.

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

Thank you