



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

**AT THE FIRST PAYMENTS OF
SOCIAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS FOR EMPOWERMENT (SAGE)**

VENUE: KIBOGA DISTRICT

DATE: 2ND SEPTEMBER 2011

Honourable Ministers,

Honourable Members of Parliament

The LC 5 Chairperson

The Resident District Commissioner

Members of the District Council

Leaders in your various capacities

Members of the media

Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen,

I feel proud and honoured to be here today, because today is a very important day for the people of Kiboga, the Kiboga Local Government and the Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development. For several months, we have all waited to see our first cash transfer going out and it gives me great pleasure that today we are here to witness just that.

I am sure some people may still have this question lingering in their minds - but why is Government giving money to people? This is an

important and understandable question. Social protection programmes such as SAGE are a new practice in our country. As such it is very important from the start that we understand what this Programme is all about.

SAGE will provide basic income security for the poorest and most vulnerable people in our community – providing immediate relief from poverty and preventing vulnerable citizens from sliding back into poverty in the face of all-too-common events such as illness, disability, orphan hood or unemployment.

The SAGE programme represents a new and innovative way in which the Government of Uganda, through our Local Government Authorities, is directly reaching our most vulnerable citizens, delivering tangible benefits, directly to people and demonstrating this Government's commitment to all our country's citizens.

But why, people may ask, introduce such a programme now, when poverty is reducing across the country and our economy is growing?

The truth of the development challenge is that even if a country is

moving forward, development will be unsustainable and ultimately meaningless if a portion of the population remains disadvantaged and excluded from the benefits of growth and development.

In Uganda, older persons, persons with disabilities, orphans and vulnerable children and the chronically ill are particularly vulnerable and often excluded from the benefits of development. Many of these people cannot afford the basics of life that others take for granted. Their children cannot attend UPE schools because they cannot buy that one exercise book which the teacher requires; they cannot benefit from free medication in the government facility because they can't get that 500 shillings they need to take a boda boda to the clinic. It is no longer realistic or acceptable to expect such vulnerable people to climb out of poverty without support. Uganda as a country therefore needs to put in place a system to support such citizens. Our vision is to develop a national system that guarantees a minimum income to all in need of such protection. The cash transfers we are witnessing here today represent the start of that process.

The cash that will be given through SAGE will help vulnerable people and our communities in many ways. Firstly, through ensuring a regular, predictable income, our most vulnerable citizens will be able to afford the basics of life and will be empowered to take charge of their own well-being. By providing a platform of economic security, such vulnerable citizens will be able to build secure, dignified and productive lives, actively participating in local life and becoming contributing members of the community.

Secondly, with these transfers, children who previously could not go to school because they could not afford an exercise book, now have no reason to stay at home. Similarly, our poor and vulnerable citizens, including senior citizens will be able to access medical services. The simple truth is that if we want to achieve the full impact of our investments in health and education, we also need to ensure that the poor and vulnerable have the means to access these services.

Finally, the money transferred through SAGE should help to build the local economy: households will spend their money in local markets, bringing an added boost to local traders; some beneficiaries will invest in small productive activities such as petty trading, bringing further benefits to the local economy. At the end of the day everybody in the community benefits, directly or indirectly.

Over the last few months my technical staff has been working hard to put in place implementation mechanisms for SAGE. I would like to challenge all partners in this endeavour to ensure that the success of this programme is utmost on our agenda. I thank the district authorities for partnering with my Ministry in the implementation. A few weeks ago, I signed a memorandum of understanding with the Local Government in which they have undertaken to dedicate staff, provided institutional support and office space all of which are critical for the Programme and for which I would like to thank the district Local Government.

On my part, I commit the support of the Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development to provide all the technical support that the district needs to ensure the success of this Programme.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that it is very important that all members of the public and especially leaders understand this Programme very well. I challenge all of you to seek more information on how the Programme works, so that together we can ensure the success of this programme. In doing so we will make sure that the poorest and most vulnerable in our society are able to access government programmes, participate in and contribute to Uganda's social and economic transformation and, ultimately live lives of security and dignity.

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY