



**Speech by the British High Commissioner, Martin Shearman at
the launch of the Expanding Social Protection Programme in
Uganda on 28th September 2010**

The Guest of Honour, Hon. Henry Kajura
Hon. Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development
Honourable Members of Parliament
Distinguished guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the British Government, the Government of the Republic of Ireland and UNICEF as the key partners in this programme, I am honoured to be here today for the launch of the Expanding Social Protection Programme in Uganda.

Firstly, I would like to congratulate the Government of Uganda on this innovative and highly important initiative, which will help address the most entrenched problems of chronic poverty in this country. The collaborating partners in this programme have a long history of engagement with Uganda, on poverty reduction and development, and we are pleased to be providing full support to this new endeavour.

Over recent years, Uganda has achieved an impressive record on sustained economic growth, averaging over 7% from 1990 to 2008.

Despite this success, some 8.4 million Ugandan people still live in extreme poverty. Over 50% of the population survives on just \$1.25 per day. Many of the poorest . an estimated 7 million people . are trapped in chronic poverty.

For one reason or another . such as age, disability, lack of access to labour or productive resources, or a high number of dependants in the household . many thousands of people are unable to help themselves out of poverty. This in turn will have an impact on future generations. When parents, grandparents or other carers cannot invest in health care and education for themselves or their children, the next generation is also condemned to a vicious cycle of poverty.

Through our support to the Expanding Social Protection Programme, the collaborating partners aim to ensure direct cash support to these poorest people, empowering them to meet their immediate needs.

Also, and perhaps more importantly still, this programme will help ensure that tomorrow's generation has a much better chance of escaping from extreme poverty and is better able to make a productive contribution to society and economic growth.

Through the delivery of a regular and predictable cash payment in pilot districts, the programme will enable the poorest households to provide themselves and their children with a better diet; to access health care; to buy books and other materials for school; and to invest in small-scale production. This will not only help individuals and families but will also provide a stimulus to the local economy.

The Expanding Social Protection Programme will help Uganda achieve the goals of its National Development Plan. The NDP includes a specific ambition to expand social protection measures in order to reduce vulnerability and to enhance the productivity of Uganda's human resources.

The development partners will provide some 40 million pounds (that's about 141 billion Uganda shillings) over 5 years to support this ambition. From the second year of the programme, the Government of Uganda will also contribute funding.

The programme will be rolled out to a small number of districts in each region of the country with a specific focus on Karamoja in the north.

The collaborating partners will provide technical support to enable Uganda to establish the necessary capacity and institutional framework initially to pilot and ultimately to scale up its social protection programme to national level.

The cash payment component of the programme - the ~~£~~ Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment - will be targeted to assist up to 95,000 of the poorest households in the poorest districts across all regions of the country. In other words, it will target populations most at risk of chronic poverty, with least access to economic opportunities or to other development initiatives.

In recent years, Social Protection programmes have gained enormous credence in East and Southern Africa . and throughout the developing world. Despite the concerns of some people that developing country governments cannot afford itq or that money used for social protection will not be well spent, the results clearly suggest otherwise.

In South Africa, for example, a comprehensive system of cash payments to the poorest has helped beneficiaries to improve child nutrition and access to education and has helped reduce the poverty gap by 48%.

In Malawi, most of the beneficiaries of a cash payments programme spent some of their money on buying chickens or goats. Over 90% of beneficiaries said household food consumption had improved thanks to the programme. Participants in a similar pilot programme in Zambia used some of the money to hire labour, and this has helped increase food production and create employment for youth.

Evaluations of cash transfer programmes, around the world, show significant improvements in people's health and increase purchasing power and this, in turn, promotes economic growth.

In this context, we applaud the Government of Uganda for its initiative in responding to the valuable lessons emerging from the region and in adapting the international experience to the specific circumstances of Uganda through the Expanding Social Protection Programme.

The energy and enthusiasm, we have seen growing behind this programme gives us every confidence that the GoU will implement a successful pilot, will rapidly develop its knowledge and capacity on social protection and will be able to scale this up to a sustainable and effective national programme in the next few years.

We share the Government's conviction that this programme will make a significant contribution to overcoming extreme and chronic poverty in Uganda and to strengthening the basis for continued and broad-based economic growth.

Thank You