



CLARIFICATION ON THE NEW VISION REPORT OF FEBRUARY 8TH 2017

On Wednesday February 8th, 2017, *The New Vision* newspaper on p. 10, run a news story entitled “*MPs want Govt to investigation SAGE.*” The story carried suggestions and suspicions by some Members of Parliament that money intended for the Senior Citizens Grants could have been misappropriated in some districts. Secondly, the report also brought out some valid concerns regarding challenges to national roll out of the Programme to all districts. We would like to shade some light on these issues, and to dispel the fears.

The success of SAGE as a Programme is hinged on its good systems, practices, policies and the spirit of transparency and accountability. One such practice is the SAGE Client Charter which stipulates the roles and responsibilities, rights and duties of the various stakeholders in the Programme, including beneficiaries. This Charter is further complemented by a Complaints & Grievance Mechanism through which beneficiaries can make known their complaints or grievances to the management of the Programme, for action.

On the various specific issues raised by the Honourable Members of Parliament, we would like to clarify as follows:

- (i) **Concerns attributed to Hon. Esther Anyakun, Woman Member Parliament, Nakapiripirit district -that “many” older persons in the district complained about their names being deleted from the List of SAGE beneficiaries. And secondly, her suspicion that the names “deleted” from the register still exist in the system and someone is taking advantage of the beneficiaries (to cheat) because of their inability to read.**
- The SAGE Programme has put in place robust internal controls and Management Information System (MIS) that are not easy to manipulate by any individual in the Programme. Both entry to, and deletion from, the SAGE beneficiary list are rigorous processes. Entry to the list means that an eligible beneficiary has been positively identified (by national ID or in the pilot districts- other credible documents like Baptism cards, old tax tickets, etc), he/she has been registered and enrolled (his/her biometrics) captured and stored in the Payment Service Provider (PSP) system. This process is a rigorous one involving a chain of actors-local community leaders (LCs, Parish Chiefs, sub county DCDOs, Sub county chiefs, through to the district development officers(DCDOs)- all backed by paper work (filled forms, counter-signed and stamped at different levels). Deletion from the list is equally a rigorous processes involving paper work from the Centre (Programme Management Unit (PMU) all the way down to the community. It is therefore not



possible that a name can be arbitrarily added on to the list, or that a name that is already on the register can be arbitrarily deleted by a stroke of pen of one individual in the Programme.

- Names can be deleted from SAGE beneficiary list following the set procedure, for the following reasons; death of a beneficiary, investigation prove a beneficiary overestimated their age but is actually found to be under age or when investigations confirm that an individual is registered more than once.
- In March 2016, the Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development, the mother Ministry of SAGE, changed the Payment Service Provider (PSP) for the Senior Citizens Grants from MTN Mobile Money to Post Bank Uganda. This means that all beneficiaries in the previous PSP (MTN) register are eligible to transition to the new PSP (Post bank Uganda), upon re-verification. That is, all older persons on the SAGE pay roll were required as matter of regular checks, to be re-verified, as provided for in the SAGE Operations Guidelines.
- Therefore as beneficiaries were being transferred and enrolled to Postbank, it was a requirement that they appear in person at the enrolment point to be re-verified, as they complete their account opening process. This re-verification was intended to ensure that the persons on the list are alive and eligible. Anyone who did not appear at the enrolment point for this exercise was presumed dead or not eligible. Therefore payments to those who did not turn up for this exercise were suspended.
- This re-verification exercise is continuous, those who missed to be re-verified earlier, are still welcome for re-verification. And once they are verified and enrolled, they will be paid all their outstanding arrears.
- For beneficiaries who are infirm and not able to come to the enrolment points, the Programme has organized home visits to re-verify such beneficiaries in their homes

(ii) Concerns attributed to Hon. Sarah Nakawunde, Woman Member of Parliament, Mpigi district; -that Some elderly persons who used to receive money have died and no one knows where their money goes. The money cannot be transferred to the next of Kin yet the Finance Ministry continues to release it. Where does this money go?'

- The Senior Citizens Grant is an old age grant; one qualifies to receive it on the basis of their age. It is therefore an individual grant; not a household grant, and it is not transferable, as age cannot be transferred. The grant is paid to an individual on account of their age. Once that individual dies, then the grant is stopped.



- Deaths of beneficiaries under SAGE must as a matter of policy be reported through a standard procedure of completing a Death Notification Form through the parish chief all the way to the district community development officer. It is criminal not to declare a death of a beneficiary. Once death of a beneficiary is reported to the Programme following well stipulated procedure, the beneficiary list is updated in the MIS and this person is removed from the payroll, and disbursements to the deceased account are stopped from the next payment round.
- However, in the event that by the time a beneficiary died, he/she had balances or outstanding arrears on his/her account, the next of kin is supported through required processes, to receive this money.
- It is important to note that during the pilot (2010-2015), when beneficiaries died, their next of kin was paid a transition grant; an equivalent of 4 months grant (Ushs 100,000) to help offset burial expenses. This grant has however been discontinued as it is not sustainable.
- As to what happens to a beneficiaries' place when he/she dies: In the roll out districts (the new 40 districts, outside the 15 pilot) which are financed the by the Government and are implementing the 100 beneficiaries per sub-county model, once death of a beneficiary is reported, he/she is removed from the list, and that place is automatically filled by the next eligible older person as per the order of age in the National ID Registration Authority (NIRA) data in a particular sub county. That is the deceased's place is taken by the person listed as the 101st oldest person in the sub county, on the NIRA register.

(iii) **Comments attributed to Hon. Genensio Tumuramye, MP Kashongi-Kiruhura district to the effect that it's not fair that some elderly persons in some districts are receiving the Senior Citizens Grants while others are not. The Government through the Finance Ministry must look for money to rollout the Programme to cover all older persons in the whole country.**

- Government started the SAGE Programme as a pilot that was meant to test whether the social protection idea of providing small grants to older persons (it could be any vulnerable group) on a regular and reliable basis works to address poverty and vulnerability. It was also meant to test mechanisms of implementing it, but also to draw lessons from its impact and viability to develop a National Social Protection Policy, as a beginning point for developing a Social Protection System for the country. A National Social Protection system is an objective of both the National Development Plan (NDPII) and Vision 2040.
- The pilot has been very successful; the impacts of the small grants to older persons are immense; lessons were drawn and the National Social Protection Policy was developed, launched by Government and is now in place. The Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social



Development has also developed and put in place systems capable to handle a national roll out of the grants.

- The Government now fully appreciates social protection as a critical strategy to reach poor and vulnerable sections of the population, but also to guarantee income and dignity for all Ugandans (by for example improving social security for those both in formal and informal employment) as a key mechanism for equitable, pro-poor and inclusive socio-economic transformation in the country
- It is upon this recognition, and amidst calls from all over the country to roll out the Senior Citizens Grants to all districts, but also aware of fiscal challenges, that Government in August 2015 took a decision and announced a phased national rollout. Under this plan, Government extended the Senior Citizens Grants to an additional 40 districts over the 5 year period (2015-2020). The roll out plan is to add 20 new districts in Financial Year 2015/16, and subsequently add 5 new districts every Financial Year until 2019/20, as follows:
 - ✓ FY 2015/16: Kaabong, Abim, Kotido, Koboko, Gulu, Pader, Agago, Lamwo, Amolatar, Pallisa, Amuria, Kween, Namayingo, Mayuge, Kamuli, Kayunga, Nakasongola, Kibaale, Kisoro and Bundibugyo.
 - ✓ FY2016/17: Kitgum, Nakaseke, Kabale, Bugiri, and Amuru.
 - ✓ FY 2017/18: Dokolo, Sembabule, Kasese, Sheema and Mubende.
 - ✓ FY2018/19: Alebtong, Adjumani, Otuke, Moyo and Kumi.
 - ✓ FY 2019/20: Nwoya, Arua, Mbale, Tororo and Kibuku.

The current roll out is therefore based on this plan. Unfortunately Kiruhura is not on this round of roll out. Funding available however, the Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development has now developed capacity and systems that can handle roll out of the grants at national scale.

(iv) Concerns attributed to Hon. Margaret Achilla, Woman MP Kotido district; that many older persons in her district are missing out on the grants because during the registration for national IDs, they unintentionally lowered their age due to ignorance. That this anomaly needs to be rectified- by SAGE.

- Kotido is one of the new districts that came on board the Programme in FY 2015/16. In line with Government efforts to make all civil registries compliant to the NIRA registry, the Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development resolved that targeting of SAGE beneficiaries in all the new roll out districts will be based on the NIRA ID data
- The National ID data remains the most credible national civil registration information the country has, that the SAGE Programme could rely on to ensure the right beneficiaries are targeted for the Programme as per guidelines
- While it is true that some older persons did not register or the age on the national ID is incorrect, the SAGE Programme could not rectify this at the targeting stage but could only



- refer such persons to the national ID authority (the owners of the data) to appeal as per NIRA guidelines.
- The SAGE Programme is currently exploring opportunities of working with NIRA to ensure that older persons who did not register in the SAGE targeted districts are able to access the national ID and other national ID registration services. We hope that any genuine such anomalies identified by Hon. Achilla will be rectified through this partnership, using NIRA guidelines.

For more information, please contact
The Communications Unit
The Expanding Social Protection (ESP) Programme
Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development
Plot 9, Lourdel Road
P.O. Box 2824 Kampala
Office: +256 414 534201/2, +256 312 202050/1
E-mail: esp@socialprotection.go.ug
www.socialprotection.go.ug