



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA  
Ministry of Gender, Labour  
& Social Development



## **The Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development is on course to roll out the Senior Citizens Grants**

In this wide-ranging interview with *(Bukedde, Etop, Orumuri, Rupiny regional vernacular Newspapers)* published in late 2016, Mr. Stephen Kasajja, head of the Programme Management Unit of the Expanding Social Protection Programme answers wide ranging question regarding the implementation of the Citizens Grant. Here we reproduce the interview:

**Could you start by explaining to our readers what SAGE, the Senior Citizens Grants and the Expanding Social Protection are all about?**

SAGE is short for Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment. SAGE is part of the Expanding Social Protection Programme (ESP) implemented by the Government of Uganda under the Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development. SAGE is the scheme under the Programme that administers the Senior Citizens Grant. The ESP is supported by UKaid/Department of International Development (DFID), Irish Aid and the Government of Uganda. The Expanding Social Protection (ESP) Programme was designed to achieve two objectives: (i) To pilot the social grants (Senior Citizens Grant) through the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE) scheme, and (ii) To draw lessons from the pilot to develop the Uganda National Social Protection Policy, as a beginning point to build a social protection system for the country.

**How has it worked so far?**

Between 2010-2015, the Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development piloted the Senior Citizens Grant initially in 14 districts of Amudat, Apac, Kaberamaido, Katakwi, Kiboga, Kole, Kyankwanzi, Kyegegwa, Kyenjojo, Moroto, Nakapiripirit, Napak, Nebbi and Zombo. However, later in 2014, Yumbe district was added, making it the 15<sup>th</sup> district.

Under the Senior Citizens Grants scheme, beneficiaries receive Shs. 25,000 every month, but paid out every two months; so beneficiaries receive Shs50, 000 every two months. To benefit, one has to be an older person of 65 years (or 60 in the case of Karamoja districts). During the Pilot phase all people 65 years (or 60 in Karamoja) and above were registered and enrolled in the Programme as long as they were resident in the 15 pilot districts I named above. The grants were delivered to beneficiaries in the 15 districts through MTN Mobile Money.

I must add quickly here that the current roll out Phase will be different in a number of aspects from the Pilot phase; for example in terms of how beneficiaries are selected, method of payments, and others.

**Let's then go straight to those differences between the Pilot and the roll out. What are the new districts the Programme is rolling out to, and how is implementation in the new districts different?**

In August 2015, following the impressive success of the pilot, Government announced a phased roll out plan for the Senior Citizens Grants to 40 new districts. The plan is to start with 20 districts in Financial 2015/16; then rolling out to 5 new districts every year ~~until Financial Year 2019/2020~~. This plan is phased as follows:

- (i) **FY 2015/16:** Cover the districts of: Kaabong, Abim, Kotido, Koboko, Gulu, Pader, Agago, Lamwo, Amolatar, Pallisa, Amuria, Kween, Namayingo, Mayuge, Kamuli, Kayunga, Nakasongola, Kibaale, Kisoro and Bundibugyo.
- (ii) **FY2016/17:** Cover the districts of: Kitgum, Nakaseke, Kabale, Bugiri, and Amuru.
- (iii) **FY 2017/18:** Dokolo, Sembabule, Kasese, Sheema and Mubende.
- ~~(iv) **FY2018/19:** Alebtong, Adjumani, Otuke, Moyo and Kumi.~~
- ~~(v) **FY 2019/20:** Nwoya, Arua, Mbale, Tororo and Kibuku.~~

This means that in the next five years, SAGE will cover cumulatively 55 districts (15 pilot + 40 new), reaching an estimated total of 226,085 beneficiaries.

**So how will implementation in these new districts be different?**

There are going to be differences in a number of respects. Firstly, because the resources we have are not adequate to cover all people aged 65 years and above (or 60 in the case of Karamoja), the Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development took a decision that for the new districts, the Programme will start by reaching the oldest 100 persons per sub county. Secondly, the Programme will adopt the National Identification & Registration Authority (NIRA) data from the National ID project as the key source of information. Thirdly, payments of the grants will be made by Post Bank, Fourthly, the Programme implementation support centres are moving from the districts to the regional centres. All these are different from the way the pilot was implemented.

**How will the oldest 100 persons per Sub County be selected?**

That's a good question. Like I said earlier, our primary source of information is the national ID data. But we have also done analysis and comparison between the National ID registry data and the National Population Census 2014 data. We find that the number of potentially eligible older persons is higher in the Population Census Data; and lower in the ID registry. This can only mean that there are a number of older persons who were enumerated in the Census but are not captured on the National ID registry. We all know the national ID registry is an on-going exercise; there are out there older persons who for various reasons didn't go for the ID registration; because it involved one moving from their home to a registration centre. So what we have decided to do to is to fill the 100 places for older persons per Sub County in two ways. Firstly, we will take the oldest 50 from the ID data; where the (ESP) Programme will use the national ID card registry database to generate a list of

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50 eligible beneficiaries. This list will then be sent to the districts, sub counties and villages for verification. At this point the communities will verify that the persons on the list are known to them, are alive, are residents of their villages and in their view eligible, by age. Those who will be verified from the list as alive and eligible will then be enrolled onto the Programme and they will start to receive the grants.

The Programme is currently designing a mechanism on how these people who did not register for the national ID and yet qualify to receive the Senior Citizens Grant can be identified. But there are several ways, they can be identified. It could be through their existing documentation like baptism tickets, graduated tax tickets, etc. Once these people are identified, the Programme will support them to register for the National ID. Once they are issued with the National ID, they can then be registered and enrolled onto the Programme and they start receiving the Senior Citizens Grants. So far we have registered, enrolled and paid, or are in the process of, paying those older persons who were already on the National ID data in the 20 new districts we are rolling out to in Financial year 2015/16. We are soon embarking on registering and enrolling those new districts for financial year 2016/17, namely; Kitgum, Nakaseke, Kabale, Bugiri, and Amuru districts.

But we are also capturing data of all persons of 65 years and above (60 in the case of Karamoja) in our database. The objective is to line up these older persons in order of age. This will be used for succession in the Programme. So that if one beneficiary dies; he will be automatically replaced by the person next in queue of age, i.e the 101<sup>st</sup> in age in a particular sub county.

**In some cultures in our country, once a beneficiary dies, his/her heir takes on all her assets and liabilities. Is this grant passed on to the heir or family?**

No, this is an individual grant. The beneficiary qualifies to receive on individual merit of age. Once the beneficiary dies, then the grant to that individual is terminated. Another person on the line, next in age automatically enters the Programme.

**For those who have been successfully registered and enrolled, how do they receive their monthly benefit?**

In ESP Phase 11, the Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development, together with development partners UKAID/DFID and Irish Aid decided to tender afresh for a payment service provider. The bid was advertised and a number of financial solutions providers (banks, mobile money companies and others) submitted their proposals. Following an open competitive bidding process, Post Bank was selected as the best bidder. This therefore means that in the current phase of the Programme, Post Bank will be the Payment Service Provider. Post Bank will replace MTN Mobile Money. Beneficiaries in both the old and new districts will now all be paid by Post Bank. We are in the process of phasing our MTN Mobile Money and transferring all our old beneficiaries to Post Bank. We expect to conclude this exercise by end of May 2017. Thereafter all beneficiaries will be paid by Post Bank.

Post Bank will be paying using Mobile Banking Vans. On designated pay days, the Post Bank vans will come to designated pay points in the sub counties or parishes where beneficiaries can go to withdraw their money. The registration and enrolment

exercise currently being done by PostBank is intended to capture the biometrics of the beneficiaries. Their facial pictures, thumb/finger prints and other details will be taken and used for opening their accounts with Postbank. At the pay point beneficiaries can use finger/thumb prints, facial recognition, or any other biometric they have provided, to transact/withdraw their money from the PostBank Mobile banking van. Eventually beneficiaries will also be able to go, if they can, to a PostBank branch and transact.

**Given that the roll out starts at the beginning of the financial year, and yet in many new districts payments have just started, are you going to pay arrears for a whole year?**

As you will appreciate, it takes a bit of time (our current turn-around time is 6 months) to identify, register, enrol beneficiaries and to train and orient district officials and other stakeholders on their roles and how the programme works, in new districts. There is lots of activities that we do before we are actually able to pay. For the current cohort of 20 new districts, we are paying 2 cycles, i.e March-April, and May-June 2016. The older districts are however getting their full normal cycle payments.

**You also mentioned that in ESPII (current roll out Phase), you will operate at the regions (Regional Technical Support Units) rather than at the districts. Explain?**

Yes, during the pilot, we operated a Programme Support offices in each of the pilot districts. These offices were staffed and equipped by the Programme. Given that now we are moving to 40 more districts, it will be unsustainable to operate districts offices. That is why we are setting up Regional Technical Support Units (RTSU). These centres will be well staffed and well equipped. Each centre will provide technical support to a number of districts. The regional technical Support centres will be located in: Moroto, Kamuli, Kaberamaido, Nebbi, Kiboga, Kyenjojo and Gulu.

I would also like to emphasise that in the current Phase, responsibility for Programme operations falls largely to the district under the Community /Social Services departments. The Chief Administrative officers take full responsibility for the Programme implementation. The District Community Development Officers are responsible for day to day operation and management of the programme at the district. The DCDO works with designated staff within the Department and at the lower levels like the Senior CDO, sub county CDOs, sub county chief, parish chiefs, etc.

**What have been the key successes, achievements, impacts of the Programme so far?**

Over the last 5 years, the Programme has been extremely successful. First, the Senior Citizen Grants reached 123,153 beneficiaries in the 15 districts. Over Shs 99.2 billion was disbursed in grants to beneficiaries. The successful implementation of the pilot registered enormous impacts on the lives of the beneficiaries, pointing to-better nutrition, access to health and education, improved savings, investments and productivity, etc, in the communities: booming local economies, increase in demand of local goods and services, and so on.

Secondly, the Programme established systems for delivering the direct income support grants and generated evidence on its impact, administrative feasibility and long-term sustainability. In addition, the National Social Protection Policy was formulated, approved by cabinet in November 2015 and was launched by H.E the Vice President Edward K. Ssekandi on behalf of President Yoweri Museveni.

It is on the basis of the success of the pilot that the Government decided to roll out the Senior Citizens Grant to another 40 districts. We expect that the success of the pilot will be replicated in the new districts.

#### **But what is the Senior Citizens Grant all about?**

The Senior Citizens Grant is a social protection instrument aimed at addressing poverty and vulnerability amongst older persons in Uganda. Social protection refers to public and private interventions put in place to address risks and vulnerabilities that expose citizens to income insecurity, social deprivation, leading them to live undignified lives.

Social protection is recognised all over the world as a critical element of national development strategies. It is recognised as key to reaching vulnerable, excluded sections of the population, thereby achieving inclusive, pro-poor, equitable development.

Direct Income Support programmes- the core of national social protection systems - provide regular and reliable transfers of money to vulnerable or excluded citizens. Key examples of Direct Income Support programmes include senior citizens grants, disability grants, and child grants

The idea of the grant is to provide income security by way of direct income support of regular and reliable transfers of money to older persons. These grants support them and their households to access basic services such as health, better nutrition, education, etc. These grants, as experiences from the ESP pilot also shows, enable these individuals to start income generating activities that provide them more investments, security and sustainable livelihoods that eventually pull them out of poverty

#### **Why the Senior Citizens Grant?**

For the case of Uganda, the Senior Citizens Grant is designed to respond to the Constitutional obligations of the state with regards to the welfare and maintenance of the elderly, constitutional and policy commitments in the constitution, National Development Plan and Vision 2040. Provision of welfare for older persons is articulated in Uganda's constitutional and policy frameworks. The National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy in the national constitution state that "the State shall make reasonable provision for the welfare and maintenance of the Aged." Uganda's Vision 2040 specifically identifies the establishment of a non-contributory social pension scheme (referred to here as the Senior Citizen Grant scheme) as priority activity.

#### **How is the Programme managed?**

The lead government institution managing the grant is the Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development working through its Directorate of Social Protection. The Directorate is supported by a Programme Management Unit which coordinates policy, advocacy and management of the grants. To enhance coordination with the different stakeholders, a multi-sectoral, multi-level institutional management framework is in place at the national level. This framework includes the Steering Committee (chaired by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development and has members from different government ministries and civil society organisations as well as the development partners).

At the district level, the Programme is mainstreamed within the local government system. Accountability for Programme results is held by the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). Operationally, districts are supported by the regional technical Support Units (RTSUs). Beneficiary cash is managed and disbursed centrally, by the PMU, in conjunction with the Fund Manager (Maxwell Stamp Plc) and the Payment Service Provider (Postbank).

**Is it true that this Programme is meant to benefit only supporters of some political Parties?**

The Senior Citizens Grants is a Government of Uganda Programme and therefore does not segregate people by political party affiliation, religion, tribe or any other criteria. All Ugandan citizens who qualify by age and are resident in benefiting districts will be enrolled to the Programme irrespective of their political party affiliation, religion, tribe or gender (male or female).

**If a beneficiary is so infirm and is not able to physically go to the pay point to personally collect their money, what should they do?**

Any individual enrolled in the programme is entitled to authorise an alternative recipient to collect payments on their behalf. This is meant to make the process more convenient for the beneficiary but is also necessary if the original recipient is infirm or unwell. However, there are procedures to follow for identifying alternative recipients. The beneficiary is allowed to authorise an alternative recipient to collect the grant on their behalf. In such cases the nominated recipient should present themselves at the enrolment point bearing both the ID of the primary recipient as well as an *Alternate Recipient Authorisation Form* – countersigned by the village chairperson and Parish Chief - authorising their enrolment on behalf of the beneficiary.