



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



better life chances for all

EXPANDING  
**SOcial**  
**PROTECTION**

# A wheelchair for fighting poverty



Photo: ESP

Sipola Asio, is a 74 year old widow. She lives in Getom, village in Katakwi district, Eastern Uganda. She is paraplegic, having suffered from polio in her childhood. Without any assistive device, Asio struggles to get by, crawling on the ground.

Katakwi is one of the previously restive districts in north and eastern Uganda. It borders the Karamoja region, to its northeast. For many years, Karamoja, a land of pastoralist Karimojong people, has been affected by inter and intra clan cattle rustling, which spilled into the neighbouring districts. Asio's Katakwi district did not survive the raids. Besides, Katakwi is also a lowland that is alternately affected by drought and floods, in

changing climatic conditions. As a result, even for people without disability, vulnerability is relatively high.

After her husband, caretaker and sole breadwinner died over 10 years ago, Asio went into severe poverty because of her extreme vulnerability. With her disability, she was much more vulnerable than anyone is else in the village.

Asio's turning point, however, came in 2012, when she was enrolled to the government social grant for older persons, the Senior Citizens Grants. Under this scheme, the Government of Uganda through the Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development, with financial support from UKAID and Irish Aid provide a social grant of Shs 25,000 per month (equivalent to US\$8, £5). This money is paid out every two months meaning each beneficiary receives Shs50,000 (US\$16, £10) every two months.

Asio's goal when she was enrolled on the scheme, was to put in place means for sustainable income, so that she would be assured of some income in the future. She therefore opted to start with small livestock. She bought a chicken, a pig and a goat to tend, from her initial social grant income. Her main reason for investing in these small livestock was that when they reproduced and multiplied, at any point in her life, she would be able to sell one to meet any of her needs. Her livestock have multiplied and she has since bought a cow as well.

Today, Asio is a happy senior citizen; her livestock is doing well and multiplying. "Now I can buy anything I want. I eat what I choose and I am an active member of the community," she says.

This strategy has only been able to work for Asio



because she had a wheelchair. With her wheelchair, she was able to get by to tend and care for her animals. Without that assistive device, the Senior Citizens Grant would probably not have made a big impact and difference in Asio's life. Her wheelchair determined whether she could make any good out of her social grant, or in the absence of it, she would have been living hand to mouth, and perpetually in vulnerability and poverty. Hers is a wheelchair that literally fights poverty. Her story would have been different without that wheelchair.

***(Note: The Expanding Social Protection Programme/Senior Citizens Grant did not provide the wheelchair, but that chair has made more meaning and value for the social grant).***

*The second phase of the Expanding Social Protection Programme (ESP II) is implemented by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Funded by the UK Department for International Development and Irish Aid, and managed by Maxwell Stamp in association with Development Pathways.*



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