



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



better life chances for all

EXPANDING
**SOCIAL
PROTECTION**

INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIP: *Eye care for better social protection outcomes*

Uganda's Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development and SighSavers International are piloting a partnership to offer eye care services to the ministry's social pension beneficiaries. Under this partnership, when beneficiaries come to receive their Senior Citizens Grant (SCG), they get access to eye care services. They are examined, treated, and if found necessary, operated, to correct any eyesight problems. The SCG is implemented under the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE) scheme. It is being implemented under the Expanding Social Protection (ESP) Programme, with support from UKAID and Irish Aid.

A disability assessment by the ESP Programme of its social pension beneficiaries shows that up to 84 per cent of older persons on the scheme report having eyesight problems. The partnership brings on board the SCG beneficiaries, which will enhance SighSavers outreach efforts. Repair of eyesight of the SCG beneficiaries, on the other hand, will bring better social protection outcomes to the older persons' pension.

Benefits of correcting eyesight challenges are several and varied; beneficiaries will be able to

count and verify their money hence transparency and accountability; it will reduce costs of receiving the grant as beneficiaries will cut out alternative recipients and aides who they may have been using to access the pay point for one or other form of reward. More importantly, beneficiaries are able to put their money into investments that can multiply because they are able to supervise and manage themselves.

Since 2010, Uganda's Ministry of Gender Labour & Social Development (MGLSD) has implemented the Expanding Social Protection (ESP) Programme. Under the Programme older persons receive Shs. 25,000 every month (about US\$7, £5), but paid out every two months hence beneficiaries receive Shs 50,000 (US\$14, £10) every two months. By June 2018, the scheme reached just over 153,000 beneficiaries in 47 districts.

On the Sightsavers' side, the service is provided through Trust Trachoma initiative, funded by The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, and Sightsavers' 'Coordinated Approach to Community Health' (CATCH), funded by DFID UK Aid Match.



Photo: ESP

I can count my money and cook for myself

Margaret Angella has been receiving the Senior Citizens Grant since 2012. Getting this monthly stipend has been good for her as far as income is concerned. But because of her visual impairment, she was destitute and dependent on others, unlike her fellow older persons without eyesight challenges.

“My right eye started losing sight gradually. After sometime, both eyes went blind,” she says with a sigh.

“Old age and poor eyesight are not a very good combination of challenges to have. Life has been very hard; I could barely do anything by myself.”

Angella recently got a perfect gift when she, alongside other older persons with eyesight problems were enabled to access eye care services through the ESP

Programme partnership with SightSavers international in Uganda.

“We were mobilized to be paid our money for old people. We were also told to go check our eyes. They examined me, after which they put me in the car and took me to the hospital,” she recalls.

“After they worked on me they put a plaster on my eyes. On the second day, they peeled off the plaster...and I could see. I could even see my own effects that I had carried, which I didn’t before.”

“I am very grateful, I am happy that now I can see the world again. I can count my own money, I can go to the shop to buy things, I can wash dishes and I can cook for myself. Now no one can cheat me,” she says.



Photo: ESP

Now I can herd my cows and goats again!

Lochap Loyatau is in his 70s. He resides in the Camp Swahili Chini suburb of Moroto town, in Moroto district, Eastern Uganda. He is a beneficiary of the Senior Citizens Grant, a scheme of the Government of Uganda under which older persons receive a monthly grant of Shs 25,000 (US\$8, £5). UKAID and Irish Aid support this scheme.

Beyond the ordinary challenges that older people his age face, Lochap for the last several years was blind and depended on others to get by.

“I was surprised,” he says, “they called us to go to receive our senior citizens grant, and they also said those who have problems with their eyes should come to be checked and treated. So I went,” he narrates.

Lochap’s eyes were examined, treated and operated upon. Two days later, his sight

was coming back.

“Now I can see. I can count my money. I can count my cows. I can count my goats. And, I can herd my cows and goats. Now I don’t fear that they can get lost,” Lochap says elatedly.

“I was a blind man. Now I can see. I thank those donors who have enabled this activity to take place. I thank the doctor who worked on me. This programme (partnership with SightSavers to treat sight problems) should reach all old people in Uganda. It should continue until it reaches all old people who have not yet benefitted from this service,” he recommends.

“Now I can see the world again. I can see far things. I am able to do so many things. I feel good.”



Lochap looking after his cows

Photo: ESP

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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