

The First Lady launches information campaign ahead of Senior Citizens Grants in Karamoja

The First Lady and the Minister for Karamoja Affairs, Janet K. Museveni, has launched the community mobilization and awareness campaign ahead of the issuance of the Senior Citizens grants in Karamoja region. Speaking at the launch event, the First Lady challenged leaders in the Karamoja region to ensure that the population is properly sensitized about the Programme. Under the scheme Ugx 12.5 billion will be given to older persons and vulnerable families in four districts of Amudat, Moroto, Napak and Nakapiripirit as direct income support.

Ms. Museveni addressing the Karamoja Regional Leaders Council comprising of Members of Parliament, LC5 Chairpersons and CAOs from the 7 districts of Karamoja said, “Raising awareness among leaders and the community is the first and most critical step towards building a strong foundation for the successful implementation of this Programme.”

The Senior Citizen’s Grants and the Vulnerable Family Grants are implemented by the Expanding Social Protection Programme under the Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development. The other districts that will benefit from the Programme are Apac, Kole, Katakwi, Kaberamaido, Kiboga, Kyankwanzi, Kyegegwa, Kyenjojo, Nebbi and Zombo.

Under the scheme older persons of 60 years and above in Karamoja (but 65 years and above in other districts) and vulnerable families will receive a monthly direct income support of Ugx 23,000.

Speaking at the same function, Sulaiman Madada, Minister of State for Disability & Elderly Affairs, said Karamoja has some of the worst development indicators in the country. He said direct income support, in the form of small, regular payments to vulnerable citizens and households can directly address the kind of challenges that Karamoja faces.

“Older persons, persons with disabilities, orphans and vulnerable children in Karamoja are particularly vulnerable. They cannot afford the basics of life that others take for granted; they cannot attend UPE Schools because they cannot buy that one exercise book which the teacher requires; they cannot benefit from free health services in the government facilities because they can’t get that 500 shillings they need to take a *boda boda* to a health facility,” Madada said.

Social Protection is recognised all over the world today as a critical element of national development strategies. It is also recognised as key to achieving inclusive, pro-poor, equitable development.

Direct Income Support programmes - the core of national social protection systems - provide small but regular and reliable transfers of money to vulnerable or excluded citizens. In Uganda, the Senior Citizen's Grant and the Vulnerable Family Grant are being piloted within the Expanding Social Protection Programme.

Stephen Kasaija, Head of the Social Protection Secretariat said, "To date the Programme is already reaching over 30,000 beneficiaries. In the next two months we will be rolling out to beneficiaries in Moroto, Nakapiripirit, Apac, Katakwi and Nebbi."