



Expanding Social Protection

Improving Government-people reach by supporting Uganda's Senior Citizens and Vulnerable Families

Background

Social Protection is concerned with measures to ensure an adequate, acceptable standard of living for a country's most vulnerable and excluded citizens; a means to ensuring dignity and the rights of citizens to basic needs of life, which is also enshrined in Uganda's constitution. Direct Income Support - small, regular payments of money to a country's most vulnerable citizens - is one of the main forms of social protection and the NRM manifesto 2011-2016 includes a commitment to providing direct income support to the elderly.

One of the objectives of the National Development Plan 2010/11-2014/15 is to "expand social protection measures to reduce vulnerability and enhance the productivity of the human resource of the country." Some of the activities identified to realise this objective include; development and implementation of direct income support programmes for the elderly, persons with disabilities and the poorest section of the population.

At the regional level, the Government of Uganda has expressed its commitment to scaling up social protection through endorsing the Livingstone Call to Action (2006) which sets out commitments to social protection and calls on countries in Africa to put in place costed plans for the implementation of Direct Income Support programmes. Uganda is also a signatory to the African Union Social Policy Framework (2008) which calls on member governments to recognize that social protection is a state obligation, with provisions in national legislations.

The Expanding Social Protection Programme

It is against this background that the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development, collaborating with wider Government, has started implementing the **Expanding Social Protection Programme**. The purpose of the Programme is to embed a national social protection system as a core element of Uganda's national planning and budgeting processes. The five year programme is currently funded by the UK's

Department for International Development (DFID), Irish Aid and UNICEF with a budget of £41 million (about Ugx161 billion). Government has committed US\$50,000 in the Financial Year 2011/12. Besides Government is also providing substantive in-kind support by way of personnel, office space and others amounting to Ugx 6 billion over five years.

Under the ESP Programme, Government is implementing the **Senior Citizens Grants** (SCG) for persons of 65 years of age and above and the **Vulnerable Family Support Grants** (VFSG). Both grant schemes will deliver Direct Income Support of Ugx 23,000 per month to 95,000 households (potentially 600,000 people) in 14 pilot districts. These are: Apac, Kaberamaido, Kiboga, Kyenjojo, Moroto, Nakapiripirit, Nebbi, Katakwi, Amudat, Kyegegwa, Kyankwanzi, Zombo, Napak and Kole.

The Senior Citizens Grants

The Senior Citizens Grant responds to the fact that although the country has a rich tradition of supporting older people, it is true that the country is modernizing. As a result, many older people cannot be sure of receiving the level of support they once expected from their children and relatives. It is also true that owing to the HIV/AIDS epidemic the country has had, older people continue to bear the burden of caring for many orphans. In fact, a study by UNICEF notes that 45 per cent of Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Uganda are being cared for by older people – particularly grandmothers (UNICEF *State of the World's Children Report, 2007*). As they struggle with these orphans, many older people suffer from a range of chronic diseases which, left untreated, can be permanently disabling. Indeed 64.5% of our senior citizens have one or other form of disability. Moreover, 93% of older people in Uganda receive no pension and therefore live without any form of financial security. When these factors combine, many of this country's senior citizens experience poverty, social exclusion, discrimination and a life of destitution, without dignity and any income security.

H. E the President said in his speech during the International Day for Older Persons (October 1st, 2011), "Older people have faced these challenges alone for too long. The NRM Government recognizes that as people reach old age, basic income security is critical to their well-being, dignity and their continued participation in the social and economic development of their communities. The Government therefore is determined to empower older people and ensure that income insecurity and all forms of neglect and abuse of older persons are addressed."

Successful delivery of the Senior Citizen's Grants to all senior citizens around the country will directly be operationalizing these NRM commitments.

The Vulnerable Family Support Grants

The Vulnerable Family Support Grants are targeted at households that have low capacity to work owing to old age, physical disabilities and orphanhood. This category

of the population most times live on the side-lines of society, they don't benefit from existing Government programmes such as health care, Universal Primary Education, Universal Secondary Education, among others. People like these live a life of destitution, hopelessness and are completely disconnected from the progress the country is making.

Why does Uganda need Direct Income Support?

Despite consistent and impressive economic growth and poverty reduction the current 24.5 per cent poverty rate represents more than 7.5 million people currently living in poverty; while in rural parts of Northern Uganda the poverty rate is still as high as 49 per cent. Nearly 40 per cent of households are vulnerable to poverty, living just above the poverty line. Sixteen per cent of Ugandan children below 5 years are underweight while 38 per cent are stunted. Despite significant investments in health and education, the poorest and vulnerable are failing to access basic services. Less than 70 per cent children from the poorest households are enrolled in primary school compared to more 90 per cent of children from the wealthiest households; and children from the poorest households are four times more likely to be delayed by up to 5 years in school than children from the wealthiest households.

The number of households citing financial constraints as being the main reason for children dropping out of school more than doubled between 2005/6 and 2009/2010. 31 per cent of people cited financial constraints as being the main reason why they did not access medical services and yet sickness / calamity is cited as the major reason for dropping out of school for children from the poorest households.

Benefits of Direct Income support to the country

Direct Income Support represents an opportunity to address imbalances detailed above in the following ways:

- **Income security and inclusion:** Direct Income Support provides a platform of income security on which vulnerable and excluded citizens can start to build productive and dignified lives and connect to the country's development process.
- **Access to Services:** Direct income support ensures that the poorest and most vulnerable are able to access government services such as UPE, USE, health care.
- **Empowerment:** Provision of regular and predictable payments empowers vulnerable and excluded citizens to make positive choices about their future and ultimately live secure, productive and dignified lives.

- **Direct, Cost-Effective Service Delivery:** Direct Income Support has proved an innovative way in which the Government is able to directly reach its most vulnerable citizens, delivering tangible benefits and demonstrating the Government's commitment; citizens see the hand of government looking after them hence creating a strong bond between the people, their political leaders and the country.

Programme Implementation updates

Following the successful set up of delivery systems and processes the SAGE Programme was officially launched by H.E. Vice President Edward Ssekandi on behalf of H.E. the President in October 2011. To date, 3,500 beneficiaries are receiving monthly grants in Kaberamaido, Kiboga and Kaberamaido districts. By the end of March 2012 approximately 15,000 beneficiaries will have been enrolled. By the end of June 2012 approximately 30,000 beneficiaries will be receiving grants. By the end of June 2013 the programme will be rolled out to all 14 districts.

For more Information, contact:

Expanding Social Protection Programme

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Ministers, MPs visit social protection schemes in South Africa, Lesotho

To strengthen political leadership on social protection in Uganda, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development organized a study tour to Lesotho and South Africa for six Ministers and two Members of Parliament in November 2011.

The team comprised of then Minister for the Presidency, Minister of Health, Minister of State General Duties, Ministry of Finance, Planning & Economic Development, Minister of State for Primary Education, Minister of State for Disaster Preparedness, Minister of State for Disability & Elderly Affairs. The Members of Parliament were: MP for Kyamuswa and Chairperson Budget Committee and Woman MP for Kyegegwa and Member, Gender, Labour & Social Development Committee of Parliament.

The delegation identified the following as some of the lessons learnt:

- Direct Income Support programmes make governments visible and government visibility brings about social cohesion and support for government.
- Direct Income Support programmes make governments popular. In Lesotho, the old age pension is a major vote winner and is seen as a fulfillment of manifesto promises. The Prime Minister (Head of Government) is more

popular because citizens perceive the pension to be a direct payment from him.

- The presidency was responsible for announcing and rolling out the programmes in both countries. In Lesotho, the Prime Minister included the old age pension in his election Manifesto of 2002.
- Direct Income Support programmes are one of the most effective poverty reduction tools that the Government of South Africa has ever implemented.
- Direct Income Support programmes improve labour market participation and access to other government services like health and education as well as building the human capital necessary for sustained national development.

Upon return the delegation made 21 recommendations including that:

- The NRM Party should own the ESP/SAGE programme.
- The Programme should prepare a Cabinet Information Paper to brief Cabinet about lessons learnt from the study tour and implications for SAGE roll out.
- Form a Cabinet Committee on Social Protection.
- Form a Parliamentary Forum on Social Protection.
- Make a presentation on ESP/SAGE to Parliament.

The Expanding Social Protection Programme is a key intervention for achieving NDP objectives and commitments in the NRM Manifesto. It represents a new and innovative strategy through which the Government of Uganda can directly reach its most vulnerable citizens; a cost-effective, scaleable, efficient and effective tool for Government to better serve its citizens and empower them to contribute to Uganda's development.

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