



**REMARKS HON. WILSON MURULI MUKASA
MINISTER OF GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

60thSESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW) MEETING

**SIDE EVENT: AGEING WITH DIGNITY: SOCIAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS
 TRANSFORMING LIVES OF OLDER WOMEN IN UGANDA**

DATE: 15th March 2016

Your Excellency,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome you and thank you for honouring our invitation and committing your valuable time to participate in this event. We are here to share with you our progress on social protection but most especially the impacts of the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment on elderly women in Uganda.

In Uganda the proportion of people living below the poverty line has significantly reduced to 19.7 percent that is about 6.7 million people in 2012/13 from a high of 56 percent in 1992. However, many more Ugandans are vulnerable to poverty with incomes just above the poverty line and therefore likely to fall back into poverty in the event of the slightest shock. Due to financial constraints, such poor and vulnerable people are unable to afford basic needs and find difficulties in investing in proper nutrition, education and health of their children. This has serious long-term consequences for the children's human capital development and productivity in their adulthood. In the face of common shocks like drought

or illness, such households are more likely to resort to negative coping strategies that are major channels of inter-generational transmission for poverty such as selling their only assets or withdrawing children from school.

In the past, vulnerable people without access to formal social security received support from their extended families and communities in Uganda. However, due to persistent poverty, rapid modernisation, changing attitudes, urbanisation and cross-cutting issues such as HIV/AIDS, these traditional social protection mechanisms are under strain. And yet, the coverage of our formal social security system is very limited-with the key actors- the National Social Security Fund and the Public Service pension Scheme covering just about 1 million workers.

Over the last few decades, it has been demonstrated all over the world; particularly in developing nations that Social protection is a key tool for supporting social transformation of the poor and most vulnerable people by reducing the risks and vulnerabilities facing the population over the life cycle. As evident from experiences throughout the world, Social Protection programmes can restore income security, enhance access to critical social services and provide an important platform for families to build productive livelihoods and be resilient to the shocks that often trap our people in a vicious cycle of poverty.

Uganda's commitment to social protection is clearly articulated in the legislative and policy framework. Article XIV of Uganda's Constitution (1995) re affirms the International Human Rights Charter (states that "*All Ugandans enjoy rights, opportunities and access to education, health services... decent shelter, adequate clothing, food security and pension and retirement benefits*") and the National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy specifically obligate the state to make "*reasonable provision for the welfare and maintenance of the Aged*".) and Uganda's Vision 2040 identifies the need to support vulnerable people by developing and implementing a comprehensive social protection system.

Furthermore, the National Development Plan (NDP) articulates the government's plans to "*develop and implement Direct Income Support*

programmes including cash transfer programmes, to the elderly, persons with disability and the poorest quartile of the population” (NPA, 2010). Uganda’s National Policy for Older Persons, 2009 and National OVC Strategic Plan also prioritize the establishment of Direct Income Support schemes.

To realize Uganda’s social protection goals, MGLSD, in partnership with the DFID, Irish AID and UNICEF, have been implementing the Expanding Social Protection (ESP) Programme since July 2010. The purpose of the 5 year program was to embed a national social protection system including social assistance for the poorest and most vulnerable.

Ladies and gentlemen, with support from Development Partners, we have made significant progress towards establishing Uganda’s Social Protection system. The National Social Protection policy and the Program Plan of intervention was developed after wide consultations with stakeholders. Unlike in the past where policies have been made and remain unimplemented, this policy already has several programs in the various sectors which are ongoing such as; SAGE, OVC programs, pension reforms and programs to eliminate gender based violence.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as a country we are proud that through the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment piloted in 15 Districts of Uganda and now rolling out to other districts the lives of these vulnerable women have been positively impacted.

Government of Uganda has committed, within the 5 year Medium Term Expenditure Framework, a total of 46 million dollars towards national rollout of the Senior Citizens Grant (SCG). This will enable us to extend coverage of the scheme to an additional 40 districts. This financial year alone, 2.8 million dollars has been provided to start SCG rollout to 20 new districts. The plan is to roll out to 5 new districts every subsequent year over the next 4 years while at the same time progressively taking over at least 7 of the 14 pilot districts currently funded by Development Partners.

The Development Partners have also committed to another 5 years of support worth about 89 million dollars to support beneficiary payments within the pilot districts and also to support the operational costs

associated with national roll-out and building capacity for policy implementation and institutional development.

Ladies and gentlemen, the above achievements particularly Government taking on the roll out mark a very important milestone towards the evolution of a national social protection system in Uganda that will also enable us work towards meeting the sustainable development goals adopted to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all .

I thank you