



Republic of Uganda

**MINISTRY OF GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

**STATEMENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR OLDER  
PERSONS ON THE FLOOR OF PARLIAMENT WHICH WAS  
HELD ON 1<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER 2023**

**BY**

**Hon.Amongi Betty Ongom**

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## **Commemoration of the International Day for Older Persons held on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023**

Rt. Hon. Speaker of Parliament,

Colleagues, Hon. Members of Parliament

1.0 I arise to brief you about the just concluded commemoration of the International Day for Older Persons.

1.1 Rt. Hon. Speaker, the purpose of the Parliamentary statement is to provide information to Parliament, regarding this year's International Day for Older Persons that took place on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2023 in Kyegegwa District.

1.2 Rt. Hon. Speaker and colleagues; On 14<sup>th</sup> December 1990, the United Nations General Assembly under Resolution 45/106, designated 1<sup>st</sup> October, the International Day of Older Persons. This development was a follow up of other initiatives such as the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing which was adopted in 1982 by the World Assembly on Ageing. The International Day of Older Persons was observed for the first time throughout the world on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1991 and Uganda started commemorating the Day in 1999.

1.3 The International Day of Older Persons is a day for raising awareness on the needs and concerns of Older Persons.

Furthermore, in Uganda, this Day is used to take stock of the achievements made during the year towards service delivery to Older Persons, reviewing challenges faced and mapping out strategies to address the challenges.

1.4 Rt. Honourable speaker and Members of Parliament, between 2017 and 2050, the number of older persons in the developing world is predicted to increase from 652 Million to 2.1 Billion. By 2047, there will be older persons than children (UN 2017). The Uganda National Household Survey 2019/20, indicates that the population of Older Persons increased from about 1.7 million in 2016/17 to 2.2 million in 2019/20.

1.5 Rt. Honourable Speaker and colleagues, this increase in population, is as a result of improved life expectancy among Older Persons, in addition to improved health seeking behaviour, among others.

1.6 Colleagues, Government is committed and prepared to address the concerns and needs that come with increased older persons' population by eliminating all forms of neglect, abuse and violence as provided for under Article 32 of the Constitution, while promoting recognition of their contribution to national development.

1.7 This year's International Day of Older Persons brought together stakeholders across Ministries, Departments and Agencies, given the multi-sectoral nature of ageing issues. Most importantly, the Day brought together Older persons in celebration of their achievements and contributions to national development while highlighting emerging challenges, and identifying solutions to them.

2.0 Rt. Hon. Speaker and colleagues, the objectives of this statement therefore are to:

- i) Inform Parliament that Uganda joined the rest of the World to celebrate the International Day of Older Persons on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2023.
- ii) Inform Parliament that the theme for the International Day of Older Persons 2023 was ***Healthy Ageing; A Call for Action***.
- iii) Inform Parliament that the venue for the National Celebrations was Humura Primary School Play ground, Kyegegwa District.
- iv) Inform Parliament that the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister of the Republic of Uganda presided over the Celebrations.

## 2.2 Theme for the International day for Older Persons 2023

2.2.1 Rt. Honourable Speaker and Hon Members, The Theme for this year was “**Healthy Ageing; A Call for Action.**’

The theme was derived from the United Nations Decade of Healthy ageing 2020-2023, which envisages a world where everyone can live a long and healthy life.

2.2.2 Colleagues, Government has progressively advanced in enhancing access to health for Ugandans as evidenced in the increased life expectancy from 45 years in 2000 to the current 64 years (in 2023).

2.2.3 It should be noted that as people age, their intrinsic and functional capacities decline. And the environment where Older Persons live determine their capacity to enhance their functional abilities. For instance, Older Persons can effectively access health facilities if they are physically accessible with ramps, and staffed with health workers skilled to handle old age diseases.

2.2.4 Rt Hon Speaker and Members, several studies indicate that Older Persons aged 75 years and above, report the highest number of sick days, an average of 11 days in a month. Indeed, the ageing process increases vulnerability to certain Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), which include heart

disease, cancer, arthritis, dementia, eye disease, diabetes, hypertension, among others.

2.2.5 Unfortunately, the requests from lower health facilities especially Health Center IIIs for drugs from National Medical Stores, do not include supplies to manage these old age-related complications. Many Older Persons are forced to travel long distances to Regional and National Referral Hospitals with associated high costs to obtain these services, while others remain in their homes to die due to lack of medical supplies for the major old age-related diseases in their localities.

2.2.6 Colleagues, the challenge Older Persons face is accessing specialized healthcare is also evidenced by lack of Geriatricians in our National Health Service Structure, with only one stationed at Mulago. Therefore, majority of Older Persons do not receive the specialize health care needed, in addition to negative perceptions where Older Persons are in most cases perceived to be “***Suffering from Old age***”.

2.2.7 Colleagues, in 2021 H.E. the President directed my Ministry to develop Guidelines on Healthy Ageing to guide the community workers on how to support Older Person’s live healthy lives. The Guidelines are ready and were developed in partnership with Ministry and World Health Organisation.

H.E. the President had also directed Ministry of Health to ensure that old age-related diseases are provided for in the requests for drugs by lower health facilities, that old age medical specialists (also known as geriatricians) are recruited, and awareness on diagnosis for old age diseases is prioritised.

2.2.8 This year's theme, enabled Government to understand the unique health needs of older persons and plan how to provide inclusive health services for improved wellbeing of Older Persons.

2.3 Rt. Hon. Speaker and members of Parliament, during the commemoration, key achievements, challenges and advocacy actions were reported in relation to upholding the rights and welfare of Older Persons.

The reported status was as follows:

- i. Under SAGE, the Senior Citizens Grant for Older Persons above 80 years was sustained. This parliament appropriate a total of Ugx 121 billion, and this programme is now fully funded by the Government of Uganda. Over 300,000 older persons continue to receive their monthly social pension and this has been transformative in their lives. Bi-annual progress briefs to Hon Members will be shared.



- ii. Makerere University School of public health commenced on the post graduated curriculum for a geriatrics course. The course is expected to build a cadre of doctors to transform health service delivery in terms of proper diagnosis for older person's health conditions.
- iii. Government of Uganda approved the ratification of African Union Protocol on the rights of Older Persons. This is a fundamental tool in terms of concretizing African solidarity in the protection of African values and restoration of respect for older persons in Africa.
- iv. Amendments of the Parish Development Model procedures to ensure access to 10% by Older Persons groups exclusively, was achieved as earlier highlighted by the Chair Person. However some few PDM SACCOs in some Local Governments are still not allowing older persons to form their exclusive groups due to ageism mentality. We appeal that this negative mentality changes.
- v. Special Enterprize Grant for Older Persons (SEGOP) was sustained to support vulnerable older persons who cannot benefit under SAGE or other wealth creation grants due to

their poor health conditions. A total of 566 groups of Older Persons were supported last financial year across the country, and more 800 groups are expected to benefit this FY 2023/24. Annual progress briefs will be shared with Hon Members showing the break down per Local Government.

**Issues of concern to Older Persons.**

- i. Amendments for Emyooga Programme, to include Older Persons as category 20 is pending. The Ministry in charge of Micro-finance is not yet to address this matter. We hope this will be fast tracked through further engagements.
- ii. Waiver on correcting errors on NIRA cards hence payment exclusions under SAGE due to age under-statement. This needs urgent attention, and discussions are under way with Ministry of Internal Affairs.
- iii. The Ministry is studying the proposal from the Chair Person of MPs for Persons with Disabilities forum, on the lowering of the SAGE targeting to 60 years for Older Persons with Disabilities, since they are very few. A position will be taken and communicated soon.

- iv. Development of inter-ministerial National Guidelines for meaningful inclusion and affirmative action for Older Persons in all sectors. These would address the moral issues where service providers and the public no longer give space to Older Persons on public transport system, in banking lines, in Health facilities, in shopping malls, among others.
- v. The special Enterprise grant for Older Persons' funding was supposed to be UGX 10bn but only UGX 5bn was appropriated. With your support, efforts will be made to bridge the gaps next FY.

2.4 Rt. Hon Speaker and Colleagues, this year the following activities were conducted during the commemoration at Humura Primary School Grounds, Kyegegwa town.

- a. Launch of a Manual on appropriate Enterprizes for Older Persons. This is expected to support older persons in selection of viable enterprises.
- b. Provision of dummy cheques for Older Persons Groups in Kyegegwa, Fort Port City, Kabarole and Kyenjojo.
- c. Gifting of 20 oldest Older Persons and the oldest was 134 years from Fort Portal City.

- d. Mobilisation for the pre-event and D-day activities including a health camp for Older Persons; SAGE payments and NIRA registration. I want to thank the MPs for Older Persons and MPs from Kyegegwa district, for the excellent mobilisation. We had an estimated attendance of over 2,000 people at the venue, out of the targeted 1,500.
- e. A total of 260 Older Persons were examined during the three day -health camp and treated or referred for further management
- f. A total of 20 radio talk shows and 6 TV shows were aired raising awarenesses on health aging.

## **2.5 VENUE AND CHIEF GUEST FOR THE NATIONAL CELEBRATIONS**

Colleagues, since the inception of celebrating this Day, Uganda has been organising the Day on a Regional rotational basis. Last year, the Day was hosted by Northern Region (Nebbi District). The venue for this year's celebrations according to the rotational matrix was Western Uganda, Kyegegwa District at Humura Primary School Playground.

The Chief Guest for the National Celebrations was the Rt.Hon. Prime Minister of the Republic of Uganda.

## **2.7 CONCLUSION**

Rt. Honourable Speaker and Members of Parliament, I wish to acknowledge and appreciate the Hon. Members of Parliament for their efforts in enacting legislation and budget allocations towards older persons' empowerment. I thank the Members of Parliament who joined us in Kyegegwa District for the National commemorations.

I urge members to continuously interact with older persons in their constituencies to better understand their concerns as we are all destined to the same end.



**Amongi Betty Ongom (MP)**

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