

## **ISER'S STATEMENT ON COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PERSONS**

**1<sup>st</sup> October, 2024**

### **Theme: Ageing with Dignity: The Importance of Strengthening Care and Support Systems for Older Persons Worldwide**

Today, the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER) joins older persons worldwide, particularly in Uganda, to commemorate the International Day of Older Persons. On 14th December 1990, the United Nations General Assembly designated October 1st as the International Day of Older Persons ([resolution 45/106](#)). The United Nations theme for this year's celebration is therefore timely and relevant. The government has a responsibility to provide quality public services such as comprehensive healthcare, social care and social security for older all persons.

According to the preliminary results of the census that was conducted earlier in the year, there are currently [2,303,548 older persons](#) in Uganda who make up 5% of the total population. This day serves as a reminder to recognize and celebrate the invaluable contributions of older persons to our communities and reinforces our commitment to advocating for their rights, to ensure that they live dignified lives.

Government must prioritize social protection and healthcare for all older persons. They face multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities. Almost half of older persons in Uganda, [48% of older persons aged 65](#) years above, are living in multi-dimension poverty. Worse still, [climate change](#) induced challenges threaten older persons ability to live dignified lives.

We commend the government for ratifying the AU Protocol on Older Persons signifying its commitment to safeguarding the rights of older persons and for passing a National Social Protection Policy. We also commend its implementation of the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE) program for older persons above 80 and safeguarding pension for public servants.

However, the social protection system for older persons remains inadequate. As [ISER's research](#) which compared Uganda with regional peers and benchmarked against the African Union Protocol on Social Protection and Social Security found, the financing of social protection for older persons is woefully inadequate. The budget for SAGE has stagnated the last three years at [121billion Uganda Shillings](#). More troubling the 25,000ush provided per month to older persons has not changed in over a decade and is not enough to meet their basic needs.



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SAGE only covers individuals aged 80 and above, excluding older persons aged 60 and above contrary to the National Social Protection Policy. Altogether, [more than a millions persons](#) above the age of 60 are left without any income support from the state. Consequently, many older persons continue to live in poverty, unable to access the essential public services to which they are entitled, and are forced to lead undignified lives.

Numerous eligible older persons still can't benefit from SAGE, due to the requirement to have a national Id as the sole identifier of age. As our research:- [Chased Away and Left to Die](#), and [You Do Not Qualify](#), has shown, many older persons lack national IDs and are discriminated against, excluded from social protection benefits to which they are entitled.

Our older persons deserve better. The state has a social contract with its people which it should not renege on in their old age. ISER in partnership with Research & Action for Income Security (RAISE) campaign "*A Peoples Pension: Shifting the Debate on Social Protection for Older Persons in Uganda*" calls upon all stakeholders to join us in the fight for better and more dignified lives for our older persons.

On this 34<sup>th</sup> International day of older persons, we demand for rights aligned universal social protection systems through domestic progressive revenue raising measures. We call upon the government to;

1. Increase financing for social protection through domestic revenue mobilization including progressive taxation and adjust SAGE amounts to reflect the cost of living, pegged to inflation.
2. Lower the age to receive SAGE to 60 and ensure that all persons aged 60 and above can get a pension.
3. Allow alternative modes of identification to ensure that the mandatory requirement of a national does not hinder older persons' access to social services and social protection benefits;
4. Enact a Social Protection Act mandating social protection for all especially older persons.
5. Ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Citizens to Social Protection and Social Security.
6. Ensure geriatric care is available at government health facilities at community level and strengthen the quality of public health facilities, ensuring drugs and staff are available.