

PENSION

A People's Pension

A Manifesto on Social Protection for Older Persons



Working Group on Social Protection
for Older Persons
Coordinated by



ISER

Facilitating Social Justice

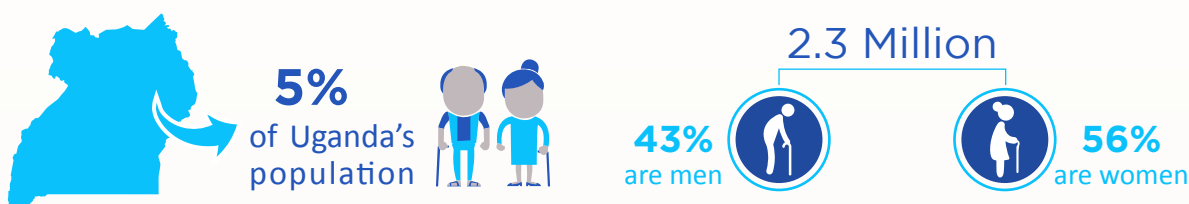
INITIATIVE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

A PEOPLE'S PENSION

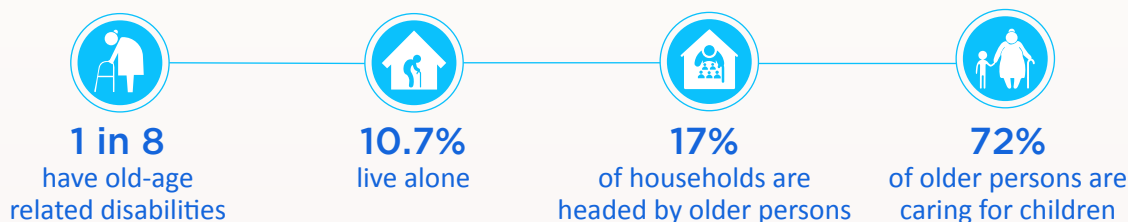
A Manifesto on Social Protection for Older Persons

Preamble

We, the undersigned recognize the urgent need for comprehensive and inclusive social protection systems in Uganda. Older persons, aged 60 and above, represent one of the most vulnerable groups in our society. This manifesto advocates for the recognition of social protection as a universal right for all older persons and calls for immediate reforms to ensure that they can live with dignity, free from poverty, and supported by a robust, equitable social protection system. We stand together in this call to action, guided by principles of justice, dignity, and human rights.



Older persons make up 5% of Uganda's population, representing 2.3 million people¹, of whom 56% are women and 43% are men. Of these, 1 in 8 have a profound disability², and 10.7% live alone. Additionally, 17% of households are headed by older persons, with 72% of them caring for children.



Old age risks affect men and women differently: 63.2% of older persons are widows, while only 15.3% are widowers. Older widows are often left helpless, stripped of property by their late husbands' families. Nearly half (48%)³ of older persons above 65 live in multidimensional poverty, unable to meet their essential needs such as food and medication. This is compounded by the low coverage of social security where only 2.3 percent of older persons receive a pension⁴.

Vision

In alignment with **SDG 1.3**, which urges governments to implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including social protection floors, we envision a Uganda where all older persons, regardless of age, socioeconomic status, or geographic location, have access to adequate social protection as a basic human right. This system should ensure that older persons live with dignity, receive adequate financial support, and are shielded from poverty, exclusion, and vulnerability.

¹ National Population and Housing Census 2024 Preliminary Results. Retrieved from: <https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/statistics/NPHC-2024-Preliminary-Tables-upload.xlsx>


² The State of Older Persons in Uganda. A Situational Analysis Report. Retrieved from: <https://socialprotection.org/discover/publications/state-older-persons-uganda-%E2%80%93-situational-analysis-report>


³ Uganda's Multidimensional poverty profile, page 9


⁴ The National Social Protection Strategy 2024-2029

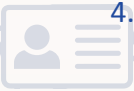
1. Current Challenges faced by older persons in Uganda


Older persons in Uganda face multiple barriers in accessing social protection, which severely impacts their ability to live with dignity and security. Below are some of the notable challenges:


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1. **Limited Coverage:** The Senior Citizens Grant (SCG) is only available to those aged 80 and above, excluding older persons aged 60-79 who also live in poverty. Other interventions, such as the Special Enterprise Grant for Older Persons (SEGOP) and the Public Service Pension Scheme, only reach a limited number of individuals.
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2. **Inadequate Funding:** The budget allocation towards social protection programs for older persons is insufficient, limiting the reach and effectiveness of any planned interventions. In the 2024/25 national budget, the allocation towards senior citizen grants remained unchanged at US\$ 121.2 billion despite the increasing number of older persons each year. The funding for social protection for older persons is dismal as a whole including limited geriatrician care.
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3. **Pension inadequate to meet basic needs:** With the budgeted allocation, eligible older persons only receive US\$ 25,000 a month, an amount that falls short of getting them above the \$2.15-dollar poverty line. The amount also does not consider the specific needs of older persons or the current economic realities.
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4. **The ID Requirement:** The government's requirement for a national ID as a prerequisite for receiving social protection excludes many older persons who lack national IDs and were not registered.
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5. **Multiple Vulnerabilities:** Many older persons face a complex web of vulnerabilities, including physical disabilities, chronic illnesses, poor housing, food insecurity, neglect, abuse, discrimination, social isolation, unemployment, poverty, mental health issues, and limited access to rehabilitation services and assistive devices. These intersecting challenges are often overlooked in the design of current social protection systems.
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6. **Accessibility Barriers:** Long distances to cash distribution centers coupled with communication and physical disabilities continue to prevent many older persons from accessing their benefits.
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7. **Limited Awareness:** Many older persons are unaware of existing social protection interventions and how they can benefit from them.
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8. **Perception of the SCG:** The SCG remains perceived as a handout rather than a right, undermining efforts to make it universally available.
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9. **Limited Social Protection Packages:** Aside from cash transfers and enterprise grants there exist no other social protection interventions to support older persons e.g. health insurance.



10. **Lack of a Binding Law:** While the National Social Protection Policy (2015) was a positive step, it needs an enabling law requiring the government to provide comprehensive social protection for older persons. This has resulted in inconsistent implementation, as seen with the SCG, where only those over 80 benefit despite the policy stating eligibility should start at 60.



Our Demands



We demand for rights-based universal social protection systems through domestic progressive revenue raising measures.

To address these gaps and ensure universal access to social protection for older persons, we make the following demands:



LEGAL PROTECTION

1. **Strengthen Legal Protection:** The government must pass a Social Protection Act mandating comprehensive interventions for all vulnerable groups, including older persons. It should undertake measures to ensure the participation of older persons.
2. **Lower the Eligibility Age:** The age threshold for the SCG should be lowered from 80 to 60 to ensure all older persons can benefit.
3. **Remove the digital national ID Restriction:** Accept alternative forms of identification for accessing the SCG to ensure all eligible individuals can benefit and address the legal barriers to using other forms of ID for those that do not have national ID.



FINANCING

1. **Increase Funding:** Allocate sufficient funds to ensure that social protection programs for older persons are adequately and sustainably funded through tax.
2. **Mobilize Resources for Social Protection:** Review and eliminate existing tax exemptions, address illicit financial flows, and curb wasteful public expenditures. Additionally, employ alternative forms of resource mobilization, such as wealth taxation, to generate the necessary funding for social protection.
3. **Ring-Fence Funding:** Ensure that funds allocated for social protection programs are protected from budget reallocations or austerity measures.
4. **Adjust SCG Amounts:** Increase the value of the SCG to reflect the cost of living and meet the essential needs of beneficiaries. Ensure that benefit levels are pegged to inflation.
5. **Strengthen Transparency and Accountability:** Address corruption and mismanagement of social protection funds through enhanced transparency measures.



ACCESS

6. **Health Insurance Packages:** Develop health insurance and service packages specifically for older persons, expanding beyond cash transfers.
7. **Mandatory Death Registration:** Strengthen the enforcement of mandatory death registration to enhance transparency and accountability within the social protection system.
8. **Complete Decentralization:** Decentralize NIRA services to the parish level to facilitate easier registration of older persons and the disbursement of benefits.
9. **Create Awareness:** Government should conduct regular awareness campaigns on social protection interventions, targeting both beneficiaries and legislators through media channels such as radio, TV, and print media.
10. **Review and Assess Programs:** Conduct periodic impact assessments of existing social protection programs to gauge their adequacy and adjust them as needed.
11. **Emergency Protection Schemes:** Establish emergency social protection schemes to address shocks such as natural disasters and pandemics.
12. **Make reasonable consideration** for older persons with disabilities and those with health conditions such as HIV, diabetes, cancer, and hepatitis, ensuring they can access services and resources.
13. **Recognize Women's Unpaid Care Work:** Acknowledge and integrate women's unpaid care work into the design of social protection systems.
14. **Support Community-Based Initiatives:** Enhance and expand community-based social protection initiatives, focusing on building the capacity of Village Health Teams (VHTs) to provide geriatric care. Additionally, strengthen programs that support caregivers who provide essential care for older persons.
15. **Protection Units and Hotlines:** Set up older persons' protection units and establish toll-free hotlines for direct support and reporting of abuse.

Core Principles for Social Protection

To build a fair and effective social protection system for older persons, the following principles must guide policy and implementation:

Universality: Social protection must be guaranteed for all older persons, without exclusions based on age, socioeconomic status, or geographic location.

Equity: Social protection programs must consider the unique needs and vulnerabilities of different groups, ensuring equitable access and support for all.

Adequacy: The financial support provided should be sufficient to cover the basic living expenses of older persons, ensuring their ability to live with dignity.

Dignity: Social protection should empower older persons, affirming their rights and contributions to society, and treating them with respect.

Justice: Social protection must be framed as a matter of justice, with legal frameworks that allow older persons to seek remedy and hold the state accountable.

Non-discrimination: Discrimination on the basis of age, gender, disability, or any other characteristic must not be tolerated in the provision of social protection

Sustainability: Social protection programs must be sustainable, ensuring that the support provided to older persons is long-term, reliable, and capable of adapting to changing needs over time.

Inclusive participation: Beneficiaries must be actively involved in both the design and monitoring of social protection interventions.

Life-Cycle approach: Social protection should not only be reactive but should follow a life-cycle approach, providing support at every stage of life, including old age.

Progressive laws and policies: The legal and policy framework for social protection should be dynamic, evolving to reflect societal changes and emerging challenges.

Transparency and accountability: Transparency in the allocation and management of social protection funds is essential to avoid corruption and mismanagement.

Gender Equality and Inclusion: Social protection must address these gender-specific issues, ensuring that women receive equal access to benefits and services

Partnership, Collaboration, and Solidarity: The design and implementation of social protection systems require collaboration between government, civil society, the private sector, and the community.

Call to Action

We call upon:

The Government of Uganda to enact legislation that guarantees universal social protection for older persons, allocate adequate funding, and ensure effective program implementation.

The Media to amplify the voices of older persons and report on social protection as a right, not a handout. Bring attention to the urgent need for reforms that prioritize the dignity and well-being of older persons.

International Partners and Donors to provide financial and technical assistance to Uganda in building a robust social protection system that is sustainable, inclusive, and equitable.

The General Public to stand with older persons in demanding their right to social protection, recognizing their invaluable contributions to society.

Conclusion

This manifesto represents our collective vision for a just, inclusive, and sustainable social protection system for older persons in Uganda. By addressing the current challenges, closing legal gaps, and prioritizing the key demands outlined here, we believe that Uganda can create a future where every older person is supported and valued.

Signatories

Organizations


Karamoja Rights Advocates Network	Uganda
Plan for Hope Initiative Uganda	Uganda
The Uganda Association of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Uganda	Uganda
Alliance for Key Population Advocacy-AKPA	Uganda
Disability Peoples Forum Uganda (DPFU)	Uganda
Uganda land Owners Association	Uganda
Civil Society coalition on transport Uganda	Uganda
Uganda Reach the Aged Association (URAA)	Uganda
South Sudan Human Rights Defenders Network (SSHRDN)	South Sudan
JayMallow Foundation	Uganda
Citizen watch	Côte d'Ivoire
Women and Girl Child Development Association (WEGCDA)	Uganda
Mindset change front initiative Uganda	Uganda
RC MAHENGE	Tanzania
MPR International	South Africa


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Nabasirye Margret	Uganda
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