

By Yosam Gucwaki

After waiting for over eight hours yesterday, older persons above the age of 80 in Labongo, Pakanyi, Kiruli sub-counties and Kyatiri town council in Masindi district finally received their Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment (SAGE) of three months.

Each beneficiary received sh150,000, covering two quarters with each month at sh25,000.

The exercise, which was led by Centenary Bank officials, Masindi district development community officer Zainab Muhindo and SAGE officials delayed due to network failure.

"I am 80 years old and not in good health. Being here for six hours is not good for my health," one of the elders said.

The exercise, which was intended to commence at 8:30am, began at 11:30am after the payment machines started working.

CHALLENGES

Many elderly individuals also experienced difficulties in

Elderly persons in Masindi receive SAGE grants amid delays

PHOTO BY YOSAM GUCWAKI



Relatives assist an elderly woman off a bodaboda as she arrived to receive her Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment payment at Kihaguzi market in Labongo sub-county, Masindi district

verifying their details, especially the thumb prints, resulting in long queues.

Many called for programme implementers to consider village-to-village distribution

to improve accessibility, citing their age, illness and weakness, which make travel

by bodabodas and bicycles difficult.

They also urged the Government to increase the number of personnel that work on the payments in order to expedite the process and reduce waiting times.

Stephen Mugisa, the LC2 chairperson of Kihaguzi parish in Labongo sub-county, noted that three men aged over 100 nearly missed the grants due to inability to reach the payment centres.

"We should devise ways of delivering this money to their homes or allowing care for them. Mobile teams should reach out to these vulnerable elders," Mugisa said.

James Balikurungi, the LC3 chairperson of Labongo sub-county said delaying the payments for three months leaves the beneficiaries without food and health services.

He advocated for a quicker process, advocating for more

officials and machines deployed simultaneously in different villages as opposed to a single paying team.

Balikurungi said delays prevent people responding to future calls to register for SAGE.

CALLS FOR INCREMENT

Despite the challenges, some elders commended the government for the initiative, stating the money helps them purchase basic necessities.

They reiterated their call for an increment in the amount, which is currently sh25,000.

According to Muhindo, the programme's focal person and community development officer for Pakanyi sub-county, over 1,700 elders in the district are meant to benefit.

"We are going to pay on Friday across the 10 sub-counties and four divisions in the district," she said.