



Payment. Some of the SAGE beneficiaries wait to receive money at Ngoleriet Sub-county in Napak District recently. PHOTO BY MUDANGHA KOLYANGHA

Issue. The beneficiaries say the scheme has helped in improving incomes and livelihoods.

BY MUDANGHA KOLYANGHA
 editorial@ug.nationmedia.com

Karimojong hail govt grant for the elderly

NAPAK. At 91 years, Mr Lokure Lokotyang, looks alert and energetic as he bonds well with his family members.

He resides in one of the congested *manyattas* (traditional settlement characterised by a common fence) housing about 20 families in Nawaikorot A village, Ngoleriet Sub-county in Napak District.

Mr Lokotyang is among the 148,000 elderly persons in Karamoja sub-region benefiting from the second phase of the senior citizens grant, the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment [SAGE] being implemented by the ministry of Gender.

"As a family, we have a small piece of land where we cultivate using the monthly payment we receive from the government. The money has enabled me to pay school fees for those I take care of and my medical

treatment," Mr Lokotyang explained.

SAGE is a government programme that caters for the elderly persons from the age of 65 years and above.

However, that of Karamoja was lowered to 60 years and above.

It has been rolled out to 55 districts. The elderly under the programme are entitled to Shs25,000 per month.

Enrollment

All the districts in Karamoja sub-region have been enrolled under the SAGE programme.

At Ngoleriet Sub-county, more than 720 residents receive Shs25,000 monthly.

These privileges, according to government, are based on the fact that Karamoja sub-region has been faced with insecurity in the past and still experiences

food shortages due to lack of rain.

According to 2014 National Census figures, Uganda had a population of about 1.4 million elderly persons at the age of 60 years and above. Out of which, 41,000 [2.8 per cent] are in Karamoja sub-region.

Ms Maria Ngorok, a resident of Bokora County who is a beneficiary of the government project, said: "This was a timely intervention from the government and development partners. At least, elders in the village have improved in terms of social services. The little money we are given at the end of the month helps us clear our medical bills, investing in livestock, farming and paying school fees. This is quite commendable."

Joyce Lala, 93, a resident of Tookitela Village, said the fund has greatly impacted the lives

of the elderly and appealed to government to increase it.

"Let the government consider increasing the fund to a reasonable amount despite the enormous challenges," she appealed.

The advocacy and policy coordinator at the Ministry of Gender, Ms Beatrice Okillan, said government has so far contributed Shs149b while development partners have committed Shs317b.

Ms Okillan said they are targeting 226,000 beneficiaries across the enrolled districts.

Funding

The Napak District chairman, Mr Joseph Lomonyang, commended development partners such as Irish government and DFID UK for supporting communities in Karamoja sub-region.