



## IMPACT OF THE SPECIAL GRANT FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWDS)

The Special Grant for Persons With Disabilities was set up by the Government to financially facilitate individuals and groups of persons with disabilities to start projects with the hope of generating income, providing employment, improving livelihoods and reducing poverty.

Districts have been receiving and disbursing the Local Special Grant (LGSG), which has been in operation for 10 years. The gender ministry came on board and has been managing the National Special Grant (NSG) since the 2019/2020 financial year.

Up-to 52.5% of households with people with disabilities surveyed were aware of the special grant, but only 1.1% had ever received it. It indicated that only 0.1% households had received special grant in the three months prior to the survey (UBOS, 2018). The overall population of Persons With Disabilities is approximately 9,832,236 (UBOS' National Analytical Report on Persons with Disabilities, 2019).

### SUCCESSFUL GROUPS

One of the successful groups is the Disabled Organic Fruit and Vegetable Processors Association, based in Luwero. The group is trading under the registered company name, Tropical Beverages Uganda Limited. It has 15 members led by Charles Isaac Mabonga.

They are engaged in fruit and vegetable processing and also equip other people with skills.

They have so far received three grants. In 2011, they got sh3 million and, according to Mabonga, the project is moving amidst challenges. They process and sell packed juice but they decry high taxes on inputs, transport costs and the lack of the UBOS quality mark, which limits their market.

Mabonga appealed to the Government to give them tax incentives.

Joseph Ogema, the quality controller, says they receive the money as a group and invest it in the venture indicated in their proposal. He says one of their keys for success is working together as a group to achieve their goal and close monitoring.

They used their grant to purchase six sewing machines for making school sweaters.

Juliet Namaliga was listed as a beneficiary of the sewing machines under the Bombo Deaf-Blind Association, but she says she borrowed an old machine from Rose Kalibaca, the chairperson of Kikyusa Blind Association and was not told it was part of the grant. It failed to function and was asked to repair it but she could not raise the money. Namaliga, however, says



Dorothy Nalubega was excited after getting sh1 million and she has started rearing chicken

in February she received another machine from a Good Samaritan.

Namaliga complained about co-ordinators of the various Persons With Disabilities projects who demand commissions to help them with their proposals. She says, out of the sh5 million that was approved for the group, they received sh4 million.

Some groups have managed to remain united. For example, the Disabled Organic Fruit and Vegetable Processors Association in Luwero town that formed Tropical Beverages Uganda Limited.

Buwama Women Disabled Group, is also progressing as senior members are training others. Some members received NSG and are involved in chicken rearing.

### CHALLENGES

There is lack of information about the two programmes. The beneficiaries cannot differentiate between LGSG and NSG. This may result in accountability failures.

Beneficiaries said the funds are meagre for their projects. Others hinted on high taxes on raw materials used in value addition and the high costs of production.

Other challenges included failure by beneficiaries to keep records, lack of transparency by some

## THERE IS LIMITED FUNDING, MISMANAGEMENT OF THE GRANTS, EXCLUSION OF CERTAIN PWDS

members, like the case for Luwero Association for the Blind who claimed to have given a sewing machine to a member whereas not.

Others decried extortion by some co-ordinators and failure by district officials to keep proper records about the grants.

The Government, however, says the contribution of both grants across the country has not been objectively reviewed and documented to guide any required improvements.

It admits that there is limited funding, mismanagement of the grants, exclusion of certain

Persons With Disabilities from the finances, limited skills for the beneficiaries in handling projects and poor communication and information. Some of the above challenges could hinder the grant's goal and objectives. Guidelines were, however, put in place for the smooth implementation of the grants in a simplified, transparent and inclusive manner.

In the three districts of Luwero, Mityana and Mpigi, there is still a huge information gap about the two programmes. There seems to be no separation of the two programmes and this is likely to end up with some funds being diverted.

Many beneficiaries know little about what they are entitled to. Nonetheless, some individuals were happy with the funding but they say it is still insufficient.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Government should increase funding for NSG to enable individuals and groups to engage in major projects that can bring big returns.

Co-ordinators and members should be encouraged to keep records and properly account for the money. Co-ordinators should also be facilitated adequately to curb extortion. This will also enable

## MPIGI GROUP

Buwama Women Disabled Group found in Mpigi district has seven members, led by Miriam Nakabazzi.

The group had just received sh4 million from the NSG and were planning to buy sewing machines.

In Mpigi Town Council, Dorothy Nalubega and Sharifa Namuyomba, both mothers with children with disabilities, received NSG through Hope Disability Women's Group this year. Namuyomba is the mother of 12-year-old Shadia Babirye. At the time of the visit, she had just received sh1m each and said each member got the same amount. She had booked 50 broilers after putting up a structure and it was her first time to benefit and was so excited and grateful to the government. Her colleague, Dorothy Nalubega is the mother of Devine Sabino, 8, a pupil of P4 at Jokas PS in Mpigi. She too received sh1m and bought birds including some mature ones.

them to effectively supervise the projects.

Districts should share information with Persons With Disabilities about the status of the grants and what they are entitled to get once their proposals have been approved. The money given out should also be uniform to promote accountability and fairness.

### OFFICIALS SPEAK OUT

Joseph Muwonge, a senior community development officer in Luwero, says the district gets sh16 million per financial year and the money is disbursed to eight successful applicants. At least 196 have benefited from NSG and many have set up projects and generated revenue which they have used to meet their needs, like paying school fees for their children, building houses and upkeep.

He, however, says the demand is too high and asked the Government to allocate more funds and put the fund back to sh33 million.

He also recommended study tours and exchange visits to enable Persons With Disabilities benchmark from other areas. He encouraged the groups to stay intact even after the project cycle. This way, they can use the groups for further development initiatives.

He added that the Government should also do fresh mapping of Persons With Disabilities to allow proper planning.