

## MPs defer approval of Health Ministry Budget over equity certificate



Members of Parliament attending a previous meeting. The Parliamentary Committee on Health has not approved the Health Budget due to unfulfilled requirements. |@CSBAG2017

**“Last week the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) indicated that over 40 government MDAs could miss out on Budget allocations for failure to comply with gender and equity requirements for FY 2017/18.”**

The Parliamentary committee on Health has deferred the consideration and approval of the Shs1.8trillion budget for the Ministry of Health, over lack of a certificate of gender equity, among other documents as required by the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) 2015.

Ministry of Health officials, led by Jane Ruth Aceng has today April 11, 2017, appeared before the committee, seeking approval of the Health ministry budget, for the Financial Year 2017/2018.

“This meeting is illegal; we cannot continue without you tabling a certificate of gender equity, I adjourn this meeting, until that time, when you provide the committee with a copy of the certificate of gender equity among other documents required of you,” Dr. Michael Bukenya, the committee chairperson ruled, before the ministry officials were asked out of the committee room.

The latest events come on the back of a meeting that Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) held with the Parliamentary Committee under their umbrella body, the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG). At the meeting that was held on Saturday, 8<sup>th</sup> April, 2017, the CSOs asked government, to consider allocating Sh5b in the 2017/2018 financial year budget as start-up capital for the National Health Insurance scheme. The CSOs expressed concern that the continued shelving of the Bill, may affect the establishment of a National Health Insurance Scheme.

In its 2017/2018 ministerial policy statement to parliament, the Ministry of Health didn't allocate any budget, neither make a mention of the much anticipated Health Scheme, which according to the CSOs, has been shelved for long. In response to the CSO concerns, the Health Committee chairman Hon. Michael Bukenya, promised to issue summons to Ministers of Finance and Health, to update Parliament on the Health Insurance Bill especially the pending certificate of financial implication.

“There are technical issues which we have to deal with first. We cannot consider the Bill, without a certificate of financial implication, so the ministers have to come and tell us, where this certificate is, we hope if passed into law, the health insurance Bill, will solve a number of issues in the health sector,” Dr. Bukenya said.

The Public Finance Management Act of 2015 mandates the minister of Finance to issue a certificate certifying that the Ministerial Policy Statements of the respective MDAs are gender and equity responsive in consultation with the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC).

Last week, EOC indicated that over 40 government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) are set to miss out on Budget allocations, for failure to comply with gender and equity requirements for the financial year 2017/18.

### Unfunded priorities

In its budget proposals for the Financial Year 2017/2018, the Ministry presented to the committee a number of unfunded priorities, which minister Aceng said will not be implemented, without adequate funding.

Among the unfunded priorities is the National Health insurance scheme, which the ministry seeks Sh5b, as startup capital to cater for the development of regulations, accreditation, staffing, equipment and sensitization.

“The sector updated the costs of the proposed benefits package and made a new request for a certificate of financial implications to the ministry of finance,” Aceng told the MPs.

### Extension health workers

The ministry also informed the committee it was in need of Shs30b, to recruit community extension health workers, to educate communities on diseases and link them to health services.

In their budget proposals, the ministry also seeks Shs898.7bn for the construction of 318 health center IIIs, and Shs164.6b, for the upgrading of existing IIIs to Health Center IVs.