

Civil Society demands review of SAGE programme, **civil servants salaries**



Emmanuel Kashaija (centre) a member of CSBAG from Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) presents the CSO position paper to the Parliamentary committee on Social Development at Parliament on Thursday, April 12, 2018. On the left is CSBAG's Edith Nambi. |@CSBAG2018

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Members of the Civil Society movement have asked the government to consider revamping and scaling up of the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE) to support the elderly who are a growing section of Uganda's population.

Presenting their position paper on the social development sector ministerial policy statement for the FY 2018/19, to the parliament's committee on social development on Thursday, April 12, 2018, the Civil Society Organisations

(CSOs) under the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) questioned the sustainability of the programme since government had not committed funds for the programme in the next financial year budget.

“The revamping and scaling up of the SAGE programme will be important in showing the government's commitment towards meeting the needs of this social protection group,” Emmanuel Kashaija a member of CSBAG from Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) told the MPs.

The UK government which was funding SAGE and the pilot has since halted its funding towards the programme, pending government of Uganda matching funds.

The CSOs noted that government's lip service to the programme indicates that the government is not committed to the programme.

Discrepancies in pay

In their position paper, the CSOs also voiced concerns about the discrepancies in pay of public servants who have similar qualifications and or similar public services pay scales which they said is a source of demotivation and the cause of poor performance in service delivery.

“We recommend that the equal opportunities commission in conjunction with the ministry of public services carries out the salary review, and not renew all contracts for persons who earn huge salaries,” Kashaija noted.

They also recommended that the government establishes a salary review commission, and also consider taking back agencies of government and other parastatals under the control of public service.

According to the EOC report 2017, on discrepancies in salaries of public servants, there is a revelation of gross disparities between different public service posts and those of statutory agencies.

The CSOs singled out the Bank of Uganda governor as the highest paid public servant with Sh53m per month, compared to the head of public service that gets only Sh4m per month.

The CSOs appealed to the government to designate a clear timeline for the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) on the budget calendar within the frame work of the public finance management Act 2015 as amended.

According to the CSOs, when EOC is not given a clear timeline on the budget calendar, it makes work unscheduled and unclear especially given that some sectors and votes bring their BFPS and MPs late for assessment.

Gender based violence

On Gender Based Violence (GBV), the CSOs noted that there are no plans in the medium term to roll out the GBV national policy and action plan to the rest of the Local Governments.

They called for the financing of the roll out of the national policy and action plan for at least 2-3 financing years to cover the remaining local governments.

The National policy and action plan for GBV prevention was rolled out in only eight local governments and no considerations were made for 2018/19 for the remaining 100 plus districts.

However reacting to the CSOs presentation, the MPs advised that the CSOs push for a national database on GBV to have a clear formula for handling GBV cases.

“You find that when it comes to GBV cases, the police and the ministry of gender have different statistics, it is high time we pushed for a national data base on this,” Lucy Akello, the Amuru woman MP said.

On the SAGE programme, the MPs updated members of the CSOs movement, that parliament had resolved to have a certain amount of the FY 2018/19 budget for the gender ministry, dedicated to SAGE.

Alex Ndezi, who chaired the meeting, commended the CSOs for their position paper especially on issues like GBV, which he said needs mainstreaming.