

District leaders, Members of Parliament challenge poor service delivery



Members of the Parliamentary Forum on Public Finance Management including Hon. Ronald Mugume Kaginda, Hon. Winifred Matsiko, and Hon. James Kaberuka among others during the monitoring visit to Nakasongola district. Inset (left), a nurse shows MPs the drugs records at Nakasongola Health Centre IV.

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The district leaders of Nakasongola have decried understaffing levels in health and education sectors and persistent delay of quarterly funds releases saying these have affected service delivery in the district.

They argued that matters are made worse by inadequate budget to enhance service delivery in the district.

The district leaders made remarks while interacting with Members of Parliament of Parliamentary Forum on Public Finance Management who were in the district to monitor the service delivery between 5-6 December 2017. The monitoring visit was conducted in partnership with the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG).

“Can’t the budget be improved to provide efficient services to the people? Secondary schools and health facilities lack adequate staff and money is released at the end of the quarter and you expect us to deliver. With these challenges we are at the crossroad,” the district chairperson, retired Lt. Sam Kigula told MPs.

He said the district population of 200,000 people is deprived of better services and urged lawmakers to amplify their voice and intervene. “The health situation is deplorable,” he said.

Increasing service delivery demands

The district chairperson was supported by the Nakasongola district health officer Dr Agaba Byamukama who said the disease burden has changed and requires adequate staffing and better structures compared to the existing ones built 20 years ago to improve health services. He informed the MPs that Nakasongola Health IV has only four midwives running the facility. “The staffing norms in health facilities are not adequate to cater for increasing demands in service delivery,” Dr Byamukama said.

The district education officer (DEO), Lubega Kajura informed the MPs that some policies formulated in Kampala are not working because they are not tested, citing the capitation grant on Universal Secondary Education (USE) which needs reform. He explained that the USE capitation grant of UGX 41700 introduced in 2007 is not adequate to meet the current increasing demands of education needs.

The DEO also expressed concern about lack of allowances for hard to reach areas since the district falls under that category and this has caused a mass exodus of teachers. “Hardship allowance is not forthcoming, and this has led to constant replacement of teachers,” Kajura said. “The static nature of funding UGX 41, 000 per student per term since 2007 can’t deliver service because the inflation has increased.”

The Resident District Commissioner (RDC) Dan Muganga observed that the district was doing badly in terms of service delivery in areas of health, education, agriculture, road works and procurement. He pointed out that students lose out if money meant for building structures is returned to the consolidated fund due to delayed procurement process. “There is need for policy reforms to handle procurement processes,” Muganga told lawmakers.

Calls for collaboration

On their part the MPs stressed the need to have strong collaboration with district leaders and the latter shouldn’t perceive the former as auditors. “We are not fault finders but collaborators to build synergies and improve service delivery in this country,” Kinkinzi West MP James Kaberuka who was a team leader told the district leaders.

Rukungiri Woman MP Winifred Masiko encouraged the district leaders and heads of departments to be creative and use the education and health facilities to enhance service delivery.

About the field visit to Nakasongola Health Centre IV and Nakasongola Secondary School, the MPs found that the former lacked an Ultra-sound scan, incinerator, an ill-equipped maternity ward, low staffing levels and lack of laboratory equipment as well as poor storage for the latter among others.

The legislators pledged to share their findings with the relevant ministries and find lasting solutions to gaps in service delivery but stressed the need for the district leaders to ensure accountability and value for money.

The Parliamentary Forum team who were accompanied by CSBAG officials included Rukungiri Municipality MP Ronald Mugume Kaginda, Nakasongola MP Noah Mutebi, Kisoro MP Sam Byibesho, Rukungiri Woman MP Winnifred Masiko and Kinkizi West MP James Kaberuka.