

Kigezi Ranks Highest in Gender and Equity Compliance



(L-R) Agnes Kisembo, the UN Women Program Specialist for Inter-Governmental Coordination and Accountability, Zamina Malole. Member of the EOC representing Persons with Disabilities, and Florence Kutesa, a Consultant on Public Finance Management and Gender Budgeting on a panel discussion during the National Dialogue on Gender and Equity Responsive Budgeting on 22nd August 2019. © CSBAG 2019

At a 47% Gender and Equity compliance rate, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) has ranked Kigezi sub-region as the best in Uganda, trouncing other regions. Kigezi was followed by Bukedea district at 46% and Central region at 45%. The EOC made the assessment in May 2019 basing on the Budget Framework Papers (BFPs) presented by district Accounting Officers.

At national level, Local Governments' performance on Gender and Equity budget responsiveness stood at 43%.

EOC Chairperson Sylvia Muwebwa Ntambi noted that the Commission has established that the biggest challenge to Gender and Equity budgeting at Local Government level is failure of district officials to understand Gender and Equity issues while budgeting.

She made these remarks during the National Dialogue on Gender and Equity responsive budgeting at Local Government level that took place at Hotel Africana, in Kampala on 22nd August 2019. The dialogue which was organized by the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) in partnership with UN Women and the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF) drew participants that included Chief Administrative Officers, District Planners, and District Community Development Officers from 17 districts.

"We are training lower Local Governments and Municipalities and districts on how to incorporate Gender responsiveness in their budgeting. We are also developing guidelines on Gender and Equity planning, which we shall distribute to Local Governments," said Ntambi.

The chairperson added that Local Governments are not performing well in responding to issues concerning persons with disabilities and children hence urged them to step up their planning.

When asked whether any action can be taken against Accounting Officers over failure to implement Gender Responsive budgeting, Ntambi said the Public Finance Management Act 2015 and Sections 14 and 15 of the Equal Opportunities Commission Act 2007, give the Commission powers to sanction Accounting Officers who do not comply with Gender and Equity responsive budgeting.

Dunstan Balaba, the Chairperson of the Association of Local Government Administrative Officers of Uganda (ALGAOU) said districts have less discretion powers on their budgets since Central Government grants contribute 96% of their budgets. According to him, local revenues and donations contribute 2% and less than 1% respectively which cannot make any impact as far as Gender responsive budgeting is concerned.

"There are also challenges of inadequate appreciation of Gender and Equity by both political and technical heads of districts, failure to implement projects as per approved plans and unforeseen conditions such as disasters which drain money from the limited resources available," he stated.

Balaba, who is also the Tororo Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) asked Government to increase budgets for Local Governments if Gender responsive budgeting is to be achieved.

"Local Governments should also be given more discretion powers so that issues of Gender and Equity can be incorporated while planning and implementing budgets. The Central Government should also emphasize that all resources sent to districts also address Gender and Equity issues," he stated.

Way forward

Balaba said there is need for increased awareness about Gender and Equity issues existing in Government spending, and skilling Local Government political leaders such as youth, women and older persons' representatives. Florence Kutesa, a Consultant on Public Finance Management and Gender Budgeting said Accounting Officers must embrace high levels of budget and expenditure transparency to ensure Gender responsiveness.

"We cannot have Gender responsive budgeting without transparency. Accounting Officers should always publish district Gender responsive performance reports in simple formats which can be understood by many people," she said.

Rama Omonya, the Program Advisor at CSBAG said Gender and Equity responsive budgeting is important for effectiveness in national decision making and resource allocation.

Uganda's Performance on Continental Level

Agnes Kisembo, the UN Women Program Specialist for Inter-Governmental Coordination and Accountability explained that Uganda beats a number of countries in Gender budgets.

"We have come a long way. The fact that we have aspects of Gender and Equity incorporated in the Public Finance Management Act is already a plus for Uganda. Uganda is ahead of many countries in Africa. At global level, Uganda is one of the countries that signed the 2030 agenda to put in place policies and laws to address existence of Gender inequality," she said.