

## Gov't stuck with 300 newly created sub-counties, says Minister



Finance Minister Matia Kasaija chats with Kagadi RDC Lillian Ruteraho (wearing a necklace) after the Local Government Budget Consultative Conference in Hoima on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Extremely right is another participant. @CSBAG 2019.

**“Government is currently stuck with about 300 newly created sub-counties and 200 Town Councils over lack of money to fund their operations” Finance Minister Matia Kasaija has said.**

“We have discovered that many politicians simply agitate for creation of new administrative units for creations of jobs. We already have 300 new sub-counties and 200 Town Councils, to get money for them to operate is a big problem” he said.

According to him, the government needs about sh100b for them to operate, which according to him isn't small money.

“We will implement their operations in phases; if I tell you that they will start at ago, I would be lying. We must be careful while creating these administrative units, there should be real

reasons for their creation; those reasons should either be the fact that people can't live harmoniously together or a given area is too big to be effectively governed,” said Kasaija.

He made the remarks during the FY 2020/21 Local Government Budget Consultative Conference that took place in Hoima on September 17<sup>th</sup> 2019. Organised by the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, the conference was attended by district LCV Chairpersons, Resident District Commissioners, Chief Administrative Officers, and Civil Society Organisations among other dignitaries.

### About the new administrative units

“When you create a new administrative unit, for instance a district, you will need a new Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), RDC, District Police Commander and they must be paid salaries and all allowances to do their work which all takes a lot of money from National Treasury,” said the Minister.

In May this year, President Yoweri Museveni also said that there should be an end to the creation of administrative units in the country. While speaking to MPS on retreat at National Leadership Institute (NALI) in Kyankwanzi, Museveni noted that the cost of financing new administrative units is high.

According to him, the money meant for the operationalization of the new administrative units could instead be diverted to improve Agriculture, the Youth Livelihood programme and Women Fund which he says are crucial to the development of Uganda's economy.

### District leaders' views on new administrative units

Cosmas Byaruhanga, the LCV Chairman Masindi district said a comprehensive study coupled with stakeholders' consultation should be done before creation of new administrative units such as Districts, Municipalities, Town Councils and sub-counties.

“Creation of more districts and other administrative units wouldn't be a bad idea if at all there was a clear criterion before approval on whether new district or sub-county is needed. What happened is that people simply applied and administrative units were given on political grounds. So, I would recommend a proper re-assessment so that those which were really supposed to be there, are left and those that aren't viable be cancelled,” he stated.

The Kagadi district RDC Lillian Ruteraho explained that the creation could be a problem in future due to funding gaps. She said most of the new administrative units don't have enough local revenue corrections that can be used to run them.

“Take an example of Kagadi, we have created ten sub-counties in addition to 26 sub-counties which were there originally, which means paying for councilors who were used to sitting allowance of like sh250,000 will be reduced. As a result people will complain and in addition they will bring political excuses. My opinion would be that people should wait on creation of the new administrative units and instead strengthen service delivery in existing ones,”

### CSOs' take

Osborn Mutegeki, the coordinator of Western Uganda Anti-Corruption Coalition said a number of politicians have been cited for inciting the demand for these administrative units without prior consultation of rightful partners like Finance Ministry, Local Government among others.

Siraj Magara, a Budget Policy Specialist at Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group said there's need for amendment of the Local Government Act and incorporate in a halt in creation of new administrative units. He said politicians are using their powers to argue for creation of these new administrative structures, which at the end become counter-productive.

“Politicians are busy creating new administrative structures and Government bureaucrats can't do anything on that. I think we need a law to change the status quo concerning such creations,” he stated.