

Reconsider Health Sector Budget reduction, **Civil Society tells government**



Chairperson of the Health sector Committee of Parliament, Hon Micheal Bukenya addresses representatives of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) at Golf Course Hotel in Kampala today. Inset, participants listen to the presentation of the FY 2019/20 Health sector position paper by CSO representative, Richard Mugenyi | CSBAG2019

“Increase or at least maintain funding for the already underfunded referral hospitals...”

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have today asked Government to reconsider the position of cutting the health budget and increase allocation to the health sector in view of its critical role towards the attainment of Uganda’s Vision 2040 and producing a healthy and productive population that effectively contributes to socio-economic growth.

Presenting their position paper to the Health Sector committee of Parliament at Golf course

hotel today, the CSOs through their representative, Richard Mugenyi said Uganda’s Health Sector financing is expected to reduce by UGX 31.294bn from UGX 2,363.562bn in 2018/19 to UGX 2,332.268bn in FY 2019/20. “The Health sector is critical to producing a healthy and productive population that is key to the achievement of Uganda’s development goals. If we cannot increase the Health sector budget; at least let’s leave the Budget as it is,” Mugenyi said.

Mugenyi added that there are still a number key items that need financing if the country is to come close to attaining an efficient health service delivery system.

On his part the Chairperson of the District Health Officers, Dr David Ivan Kanya challenged the Government to provide financing towards District Health Officers, arguing that they are among the worst paid. “How can we have quality in health service supervision especially at the local government level when we are not paying attention to District Health Officers?” Dr Kanya asked.

The CSOs appreciated the Health Ministry for the progress towards upgrading 124 Health Centre IIs to Health Centre IIIs in FY 2018/19, the completion of construction works for the Specialised Maternal and Neonatal Unit at Mulago Hospital, the Health Service Commission recruitments of more than 900 health workers. According to Mugenyi, in FY 2019/20 Primary Health Centres will be allocated UGX 517.112bn, which is a slight decrease from UGX 538.639bn approved in the FY 2018/19, most of which will be towards upgrading of the health facilities and whilst the actual Primary Health Care services are yet to be enhanced.

Contradicting priorities

He added that the proposed budget for FY 2019/20 cuts the funding for this programme further by UGX 21.527bn, a reduction which he said contradicts the Ministry of Health priority of preventive rather than curative strategy. He argued that since PHC is vital in implementing preventive strategies, its reduction will impede these efforts and hence increase the disease burden.

In his response to CSO submissions the Health Committee Chairperson, Hon. Micheal Bukenya agreed that supervision of health service provision is critical as earlier highlighted by the Chairperson of the District Health Officers. He pledged to work with the representatives of the District Health Officers to ensure that their remuneration is enhanced.

Hon. Bukenya thanked CSBAG and all CSOs their engaging presentation which he said had highlighted a range of interesting issues that Parliament was going to follow up. “This engagement is useful and empowering. You have highlighted a number of issues but we also need to make sure that the ministry of Health is following its priorities,” he challenged the CSOs.

Community concerns

According to the Ministry of Health Annual Health Sector Performance Report FY 2017/18, unavailability of medicines/supplies topped the list (at 23%) among the major concerns of the communities in Uganda (National Household Survey 2016/17 by UBOS). This was followed by long waiting time (13%), long distance (12%), limited range of services (14%) and understaffing (10%), at public health facilities.

The CSOs also asked Government to increase or at least maintain funding for the already underfunded specialised institutions and referral and regional hospitals to cater for the ever-increasing cases of patients. This will strengthen referral systems to prioritise diagnosis and treatment of non-communicable diseases; and reducing referrals abroad.

Relatedly the CSOs asked Government to allocate resources for the construction and equipping of the 200 beds at the Uganda Heart Institute complex and construction of blood banks, at Kabale, Arua, Moroto, Soroti and Lira regional referral hospitals.

The CSO health sector position paper for FY 2019/20. Specifically, this position paper was put together by Reproductive Health Uganda, World Vision Uganda, The National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU), Oxfam Uganda and Kick Corruption out of Uganda.