

CSOs urge parliament to allocate UGX 3 Bn for labour externalization sector



From right: Christina Namubiru, Program Associate at CSBAG, Emmanuel Kashaija, Program Manager at FOWODE, Lydia Bonabaana of Right 2 Grow, and Okema William of Right 2 Grow, as they met with Parliament's Committee on Gender, Labor and Social Development on 01/04/2025. (Photo: CSBAG)

The government needs to cover the UGX 3 billion funding gap in the regularization of the labour externalization sector to adequately cater for deployment of labour attaches, pre-departure training, legal aid, and reintegration support to safeguard the rights and welfare of migrant workers throughout their employment cycle

The House committee on Gender has been urged to persuade government to sufficiently finance and install measures that will preserve and sustain the welfare of Ugandans across all spheres. This was contained in the joint presentation that the Civil Society Organisation (CSO) authored to the committee that is currently processing the Ministerial Policy Statement (MPS) of the sector.

CSO members are unhappy that despite the significant contribution of migrant workers to Uganda's economy, the government has not done enough to address the work-related challenges they face.

"Uganda has in the recent past experienced a surge in in labour migration, particularly to the Middle East, with estimates pointing to over 165,000 Ugandans currently working in the Middle East. The trend in labour migration corresponds with growth in remittance inflows which grew by 13.4 per cent in 2024 reaching USD1.42 billion (Shs5.5 trillion), representing about 3 per cent of Uganda's GDP," Mr Emmanuel Kashaija, Program Manager FOWODE said.

The committee was notified that "despite this immense contribution to the economy, Ugandan migrant workers have largely remained unsupported especially in terms of social protection, repatriation and reintegration."

For this reason, Mr Kasaija rallied lawmakers to "ensure traceability of Uganda's labour force abroad, it is essential that resources be allocated to FastTrack the implementation of a centralized database to track migrant workers, monitor their conditions abroad, and support reintegration upon return."

He added "There is a need to put in place a policy framework through which migrant workers can contribute to a mandatory social protection fund to aid their re-integration upon return."

Make sure children are protected

The CSO members are equally disturbed that majority of Ugandan children that are susceptible to abuse and exploitation because majority of the available safety measures are not adequately resourced to insulate children from threats thrown at them.

In a specific term, the committee was notified that "Uganda's child protection systems remain weak and fragmented with poor coordination, scarcity of resources to provide proper services for children, leaving them un-empowered to report abuse."

Mr Kashaija went to state that "Despite policies such as the Children Act as amended (2016) in place which states the provision for access to justice for children through the Criminal and Civil Justice Systems, whether as witnesses, victims or in conflict with the law and traditional beliefs that often perpetuate certain forms of violence."

As remedial action, the CSO recommended that "There is a need to allocate funds to support the line Ministry and community-based departments in districts in popularizing initiatives such as the 24-hour "Sauti 116" toll-free national child helpline and working with schools to strengthen reporting and response mechanisms."

Avail more welfare for senior citizens

Considering that there has been a persistently growing challenge in the access of supportive funds ring fenced for Ugandans aged 80 years and above, government has been advised to institute measures that will ease access to such financial by the target group.

"We acknowledge the increment in Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment (SAGE) funding from Shs100BN in FY 2024/25 to Shs121BN in FY 2025/26. This however still falls short of the amount needed to reach the 502,295 Ugandans aged 80 years and above," Mr Kashaija said.

He added "There have also been challenges in accessing these grants due to absence of national ids which is mandatory for accessing these grants."

It was therefore suggested that sufficient funding availed in the 2025/26 budget for the matter as housed in the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoLGSD).

"Increase funding to at least to cover 80-year-olds across the country. It was noted that the UGX 121 billion allocated to SAGE includes operational costs. A simple calculation based on the National Population 2024 figures shows that UGX 150.688 billion is required for support grants alone if all the people above 80 years of age are to be covered," Mr Kashaija said.

He added "A coordinated approach with National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) to ensure that all elderly persons can access national ids and thereafter access these funds." Considering that the Ministry of Gender is one of the entities with a constrained resource envelope as compared to other entities like the Ministry of Defence that periodically get a lion's share of the national budget, CSO members have advised the committee to use its final report on the MPS to convince Parliament allocate required funds for the said sector.

"There is a need for strategic and sustained investment in community mobilization and mindset change initiatives if Uganda is to achieve on its fourth NDP, SDG targets and key aspirations like Vision 2040. It is the only way to ensure that citizens are moving in the same strategic direction and share a national vision," Mr Kashaija told MPs.

The presentation submitted to parliament was jointly prepared by FAWODE, African Youth Development Link, Women and Girl Child Association, and National Union for Persons with Disabilities