

CSOs Push for Accountability and Funding Restoration as the Lands Sector faces Backlogs.



CSOs making contributions towards legislative discussions on the Ministerial Policy Statement FY 2026/27 at Parliament before the committee on Lands, Housing and Urban Development on Wednesday, 25th March 2026. Photo:(CSBAG)

CSOs under the umbrella of the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) warn that chronic inefficiencies, a massive backlog of land applications, and delayed compensation for Project Affected Persons (PAPs) threaten to derail Uganda's socio-economic transformation agenda

As Parliament's Committee on Lands, Housing and Urban Development scrutinizes the Ministerial Policy Statement (MPS) for the upcoming financial year, FY2026/27, CSOs have raised urgent concerns over a drastic reduction in funding for the sector. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) under the umbrella of the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) warn that chronic inefficiencies, a massive backlog of land applications, and delayed compensation for Project Affected Persons (PAPs) threaten to derail Uganda's socio-economic transformation agenda.

In a position paper submitted to the committee, presented by a coalition of CSOs including CSBAG and its members, Uganda Community Based Association for Women and Children Welfare(UCOBAC), and the Advocacy Coalition for Sustainable Agriculture (ACSA) led by Participatory Ecological Land Use

Management (PELUM) Uganda's Onen Moses, the CSOs highlighted that the budget for the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development has been slashed by **50.9%**, falling from **UGX 336.591 billion in FY2025/26 to UGX 171.423 billion in FY2026/27**. The groups argue that this cut comes at a critical time when the sector is already struggling with rising land disputes, rapid urbanization, and a growing housing deficit.

"This reduction is likely to constrain the implementation of key sector priorities, including scaling up land registration under the Systematic Land Adjudication and Certification (SLAAC) programme and strengthening physical planning systems."

Onen noted, urging the government to reconsider the funding levels to align with the scale of the sector's challenges. CSOs recommended that Parliament demand a detailed explanation from the Ministry on how key sector targets will be achieved under the reduced budget, and that priority be given to protecting critical development expenditures, particularly those supporting land registration, physical planning, and urban infrastructure.

Despite previous investments in digitalization and decentralization, data from the Auditor General's Report (2025) reveals a deteriorating performance in land administration. The completion rate for land registration applications has plummeted from **77% in FY2021/22 to a mere 41% in FY2024/25**. The report indicates that out of 934,645 applications received, over **277,000 remain unprocessed**, creating a significant bottleneck.

MPs on the committee echoed these frustrations, questioning the effectiveness of the Ministry Zonal Offices (MZOs), which were established to bring services closer to the people.

"What was the purpose of the Ministry Zonal Offices?" asked the Woman MP Apac Hon. Betty Awor Engoola. "If the aim was to improve time and efficiency, why are we still seeing conflicts arising from the roles and distributions of the land office in districts and Ministry Zonal Offices?"

CSOs recommended that the Ministry implement a time-bound strategy to clear the backlog of over **277,000** land registration applications, with clear performance targets for each Ministry Zonal Office. They also called for the prioritization of data cleaning and full functionality of the National Land Information System (NLIS). Additionally, they urged the Ministry to enforce adherence to Client Charter timelines and regularly report on compliance, while Parliament was called upon to require periodic reporting on processing times and completion rates by each MZO.

According to the Auditor General's findings, a staggering **7,767 PAPs** remain unpaid for four major projects, with outstanding compensation valued at **UGX 533.23 billion**. For seven donor-funded projects, another **6,597 PAPs** are owed **UGX 320.14 billion**.

The human cost of these delays was brought to the floor by Hon. Norah Birgwa, District Woman Representative, Bulisa, who highlighted a crisis in her constituency. "The community is up in arms in my district. Government took their land, but they were never compensated," she said. She hopes that the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development will provide a comprehensive report on which entities hold land titles and the valuation of that land.

In response to the compensation crisis, CSOs and MPs called on Government to enhance transparency by reporting the full extent of compensation obligations and backlogs in future Ministerial Policy Statements. They urged that adequate and predictable funding be prioritized to clear outstanding compensation obligations, and that coordination between land administration, valuation, and implementing agencies be strengthened to improve efficiency in compensation processes.

Parliament was also urged to require periodic reporting on compensation status and associated fiscal risks across major infrastructure projects.

On the compounding of the issue of public assets, Pascal Muhangi from the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) pointed to a glaring oversight in public land management. He noted that the Ministry's own client charter performance remains unreported, and that a staggering **73% of government entities, especially Local Governments, lack land titles**.

"Out of 57 entities, 73% don't have titles, particularly Local Governments," Muhangi stated. He called for the Ministry to provide a full inventory of land under its management—a disclosure that has never been made.

The issue of land under cultural institutions also sparked debate. Kyegegwa District Woman MP, Hon. Flavia Kabahenda, raised a complex question

"Our missions abroad are not titled, but what about cultural institutions that hold land which we claim is public land? How does the government compensate or work with these cultural institutions on this matter?" She suggested urgent government intervention. CSOs recommended that the government establish a clear policy framework for engaging cultural institutions on land matters, clarifying ownership rights, compensation mechanisms, and the status of land claimed as public land to prevent disputes and ensure efficient service delivery.

As the budget approval process continues, the CSOs and MPs are calling for Parliament to prioritize the sector. Key demands include restoring critical funding for land registration and physical planning, implementing a time-bound strategy to clear the backlog of over 277,000 land applications, strengthening land dispute resolution mechanisms while clarifying the roles of MZOs and district land offices, and establishing clear frameworks for engaging cultural institutions on land matters while ensuring a full inventory of public land assets is disclosed.