

Civil Society asks Parliament for an audit into Youth livelihood Fund



CSOs presenting their Position Paper on the Social Development Sector Ministerial Policy Statement to the Parliamentary Committee on Gender at Parliament today, 20th April, 2017. |@CSBAG2017

“CSOs also asked government to commit more funds to the Equal Opportunities Commission for efficient service delivery. The commission has a funding requirement of Sh20.3b but has only 6.4 billion for the FY 2017/18.”

Civil society organizations, have asked parliament to cause an audit into the Youth Livelihood Program (YLP), to deal with the low rate recovery of the funds and what they described as corruption in the implementation of the program.

Presenting their Position paper on the social development sector ministerial policy statement for the financial year 2017/2018 to the parliament committee on gender, the CSOs, under their umbrella body Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) decried the many challenges that have faced the implementation of the program, at the expense of the vulnerable poor youth groups.

“We are concerned about the low rate of recovery of the funds, from the groups. The repayment levels are minimal across the country, with many districts registering poor performance,” Jeff Wadulo, CSBAG’s parliament liaison officer said.

In his submission to the committee, Wadulo listed some of the districts that have abused the program, as Apac, Lamwo and Pader in Northern Uganda, Kamuli, Mayuge in Busoga region and Bundibugyo in Western Uganda.

He told the committee that only 36% of the expected recoveries had been made by January 2016, which he noted that affects the disbursement of funds to other youth groups, since the program is a revolving one. According to CSBAG, the program has been affected by corruption; with some beneficiaries conniving with district technical officers to share the money on a commission basis.

“Besides doing your oversight role, you should consider having an audit into these funds, some politicians organize their youth groups and they want to be the only beneficiaries of the funds yet there are other youth who should benefit from the program,” Ali Kaviiri, a member of CSBAG said.

CSBAG indicated that while the YLP monitoring and evaluation strategy shows that 39% of the total disbursement should be recovered, by the end of the third year of the program, only Sh2.2b has been recovered. The CSOs also reported that some youth were shunning the program, for fear of being arrested by local authorities such as RDCs.

“Young people are running away from these funds because they fear RDCs who want to arrest them. With only Sh2b recovered, the future of this fund remains questionable.” Ahmed Hadji, a member of CSBAG, told the MPs.

Response from Parliament

However in their response, the committee chaired by Margaret Komuhangi, pledged to engage the ministry of labour regarding the management of the fund, asking CSOs, to help in sensitizing of the youth for better management of the funds.

“Parliament recommended that this program is reviewed so that we don’t lose it because it helps in fighting poverty among the youth, but as CSOs, you also need to help parliament in ensuring that this program is well implemented,” Komuhangi said.

Mile Mugeni, the Butaleja district woman MP, noted that many youth had been arrested, as a result of failing to pay back the funds. She referred to the need for sensitization on how the funds can be better managed.

Both CSBAG and the MPs, resolved that sensitizing and training of the beneficiaries of the fund, is intensified for proper management of the funds. The Sh265bn is a government program aimed at empowering the youth start up income generating activities, to fight poverty. The program covers 116 districts including KCCA.

At the same meeting, the CSOs also proposed that the government scales up the social assistance grants for empowerment (SAGE) programme, to benefit the elderly. In their recommendations, the CSOs asked the government to consider funding initiatives aimed at improving the welfare of people, especially at community level.

Just like CSBAG, the committee urged the government to commit more funds to the gender ministry to deal with programs such as the SAGE program which they said are underfunded and not given priority.