

MPs vow to push for appropriate budget for **water and sanitation FY2017/18**



Members of Parliament attending a meeting with CSOs to discuss water issues in the National Budget Framework Paper FY2017/18, today, 27th January 2017 at Golf course Hotel. |@CSBAG2017

“ The Members of Parliament have pledged to ensure that the budget for water and sanitation FY2017/18 is increased.”

This follows the glaring facts presented by Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) on the water and sanitation sector during a breakfast meeting with Members of Parliament on the Parliamentary Forum on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) held at Golf Course Hotel today, 27th January 27.

While presenting the CSO position paper on Water and sanitation to the Members of Parliament on WASH,

Frank Tunamasiko, the WASH expert informed the lawmakers that unless gaps such as inadequate funding for water for production and water sources for schools are addressed some people and animals are going to die due to climate change/water distress while pupils and students will risk contracting diseases. He further pointed out that there is low functionality of water facilities in schools resulting from limited investment in operation and maintenance as well as degraded watersheds.

He stressed the situation was pathetic regarding sanitation and hygiene where for example 190 pupils in Mbale district line up for one stance during break time instead of the recommended ratio 1:40 pupils per stance. According to the National Budget Framework Paper FY 2017/18, the current latrine pupil stance ratio is 1:70. Hand washing with soap after using the toilet has continued to be low with only 34% and 36% of the schools and households respectively, which puts the lives of citizens at risk of faecal related diseases," Twinamatsiko said.

He submitted that there is limited funding for sanitation across the sectors of water, health and education. Other areas of concern he hinted include conflicting institutional mandates around water for production between agricultural and water sectors, poor coordination of sanitation and hygiene and understaffing among others.

In his presentation CSBAG recommendations included; the need to streamline the mandates of the Ministry of education and health work together governed by a MoU and to recruit more district water officers and support staff to take lead in implementing WASH related programs to address the challenges associated with poor hygiene and sanitation among others.

In reaction to the CSO presentation, Members of Parliament called on Government to intervene to arrest the water sector due to prolonged dry spell. "We are committed to push for appropriate budget for water to arrest the situation," Kumi County MP Charles Ilukol said.

Present was the State Minister of Local Government Jenipher Namayingo who castigated the District Water Officers for not putting the budget for boreholes rehabilitation into good use. She further advised that there is need to revive the water committee at the district and sub-county levels. Kiboga MP, Dr. Keefa Kiwanuka told fellow legislators that the cattle were already dying in his district due to water distress and therefore he is going press Government to increase funds for water.

Other Members of Parliament were; Honorable Veronica Eragu, Kaberamaido MP who blamed the contractors for using substandard materials in drilling boreholes which has led to their disfunctionality and pledged to fight for budget increase on water sector. In some districts water and sanitation is worse where the Buhaguzi County MP, Hon. Daniel Muheirwe, shocked participants by stating that in some districts and Health Centres IV, open defecation was the order of the day and thus the situation needs to be addressed.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Caesar Kimbugwe, Senior Programme Coordinator Policy and Advocacy at WaterAid Uganda urged Members of Parliament to capitalize on their mandate to lobby for increased budget allocation to the Water and Environment sector.