

CSOs, Police call for increased funding to curb gender based violence



L-R: Harriet Mpagi of the Gender ministry, Margaret Kakande of the Finance ministry, moderator, Allan Rugambwa, Actionaid's Harriet Gimbo and Maureen Atuhaire of the Uganda Police at the event today.

“Right now, gender based violence, is not one of the key priorities for government as CSOs...”

Members of the civil society movement, the Police and the Gender ministry have attributed the increased cases of gender based violence, to limited funding by the government. According to Margaret Mpagi, the director gender in the ministry of gender and social development, limited funding has frustrated programs aimed at empowerment of women and enforcement of the Gender based Violence Act.

“Financing is still a major challenge to us; we can hardly do any work without funding. To enforce women empowerment, we need money. The funding we have, doesn't match the magnitude of work that we are doing,” Mpagi said.

She made remarks today during a dialogue on public financing for gender based violence intervention in Uganda at Protea Hotel in Kampala organized by the Civil Society organizations under their body the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG). Mpagi noted that most of the work related to women empowerment is supported by development partners due to lack of adequate national funding. Just like the Gender ministry, the Police's department for gender and children affairs is also facing the same challenge of limited funding.

More police funding

According to Maureen Atuhaire, an official in the office of gender in the Uganda police, limited funding affects activities like rescuing of gender based violence victims, due to lack of transport and related needs. “We receive money, but it comes in minimal amounts, so we end up depending on donors,” Atuhaire said. She added that due to limited funding, the department some time faces challenges related to logistics, to reach out to victims of gender based violence especially in rural areas.

During the dialogue, participants raised concerns of access to police forms by the victims who are most of the times. They noted that with increased funding, materials such as police form 3As which are required for cases on domestic violence can be accessed by victims without first paying for them.

“We need to empower the police so that it has enough materials needed by victims of gender based violence, you report a case and then police says it has no fuel to run to the crime scene. Such things need to be addressed,” said Christine Akumu from Ngora district.

Use existing budget line

The CSOs also noted that there is need to involve men in the fight against gender based violence to get rid of the vice. On her part, Margaret Kakande, the director gender in the ministry of finance said the ministry through gender equity budgeting was pushing for financing of women empowerment programs to ensure economic empowerment of vulnerable groups like the women and the children. “The best way to promote gender equity budgeting is not creating a budget line for women, but using the existing budget to empower women by for example putting money in the education sector to promote the girl child education,” Kakande said.

To increase funding from government, she urged the civil society movement, to consider advocating for an increment in the budget for gender, to fight vices like gender based violence. “Right now gender based violence, is not one of the key priorities for government, but as CSOs, if you advocate for increased budgeting towards gender based violence, it will be made a priority by government,” Kakande said.

Need to change attitude

The dialogue was organized by the civil society organizations (CSOs) under their body civil society budget advocacy group, (CSBAG) and Trocaire as part of activities to mark sixteen days of gender activism. “We must all rise up and do something about gender budgeting and cases of gender based violence. It is a problem that we should address as a country, said Carol Namagembe, the CSBAG programme manager.

Ian Dolan, the country director Trocaire said Uganda has the highest statistics of Gender based Violence adding that in every six hours, there is rape. He urged Ugandans to change their attitude towards gender based violence, saying it is the only way the vice will be addressed. “We need to change our attitude and cultural beliefs towards GBV, and promote women empowerment to avoid violence against women,” said Dolan. The meeting also identified poverty, which they said government needs to deal with, as one of the main causes of gender based violence.