

# Activists ask for recruitment of more public health workers

By Moses Mulondo

The Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) has asked the Government and Parliament to commit more funds towards the recruitment of more public health workers in the next budget.

Releasing their budget performance report for the 2016/2017 financial year at Golf Course Hotel in Kampala yesterday, the CSBAG budget policy specialist, Sophie Nampewo, said the shortage of health workers in Uganda was dangerous.

"The current wage bill for health is sh400b at a staffing level of 71%. This means that we are short of staffing of 29%," Nampewo explained.

She said the small number of medical workers was one of the reasons service delivery in the health sector was poor.

"From the study we carried out, we realised the average physician to patients ratio is 1:1000. This does not only affect the operations of the health centres but also the citizens' access to health services," CSBAG said in a report.

In 2016, CSBAG had suggested that the Government allocates sh36b towards recruiting an additional 3,542 health workers but Cabinet and Parliament rejected the proposal.

Nampewo said according to their research, many schools and

health facilities lack functioning water points and toilets.

CSBAG, working with various civil society groups, surveyed 579 primary schools and 105 health facilities in 29 districts sampled from the various regions of the country.

"From what we observed, much needs to be done by both the central and local governments in ensuring that service delivery units have functional water points in their vicinity and enough toilet stances to reduce on the pupil/patience to toilet stance ratio in schools and health facilities respectively," CSBAG proposed.

## BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ **Eva Mulema Matsiko asked the Government to fire accounting officers who were convicted of corruption.**

Nampewo said many of the health facilities they went to did not have functioning water points, which made patients vulnerable to diseases.

The group also carried out a mini-survey on the payment of pension in Kasese district and found that out of 28 pensioners, 16 had received their pension while eight had not.

CSBAG asked the finance

ministry to take punitive measures against accounting officers who fail to remit pension money on time.

Outside their report, CSBAG co-ordinator Julius Mukunda commended the finance ministry for recommending the firing of over 60 district accounting officers for failing to account for public funds.

"For the last one year, we have been relentlessly asking the finance ministry to fire accounting officers who fail to account for public funds. The decision to fire some district accounting officers is a welcome move. Although some say those are small fish, we hope even the big fish in the central government will be dealt with," Mukunda said.

The finance ministry principal economist, Robert Ssekate, who represented the budget director, said since Cabinet had resolved to increase salaries of medical workers in the next budget, the ministry would have constraints to also avail funds for the recruitment of more health workers.

RTI International's chief of party for governance and accountability Eva Mulema Matsiko asked the Government to fire accounting officers who were convicted of corruption.

Matsiko said they had information on many such accounting officers.