Govt courts reformed sex workers

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KAMPALA. Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development this week opened its doors to more than 100 sex workers.

Some, according to sources who attended a closed-door meeting at the ministry offices in Kampala, were hesitant to face government officials for fear that they could be arrested.

But after a lot of convincing and explaining, they accepted to meet the ministry's permanent secretary, Mr Pius Bigirimana and his team, last Monday. The government is seeking to rescue and rehabilitate sex workers using Green jobs money and other budget votes in the ministry.

In a meeting with a section of the self-confessed sex workers that *Daily Monitor* has learnt about, senior ministry officials convinced the mainly youthful sex workers to abandon the trade altogether.

Terming them as "vulnerable people," sources in the meeting say the sex workers, mainly drawn from Kampala city suburbs, were taken through series of moral lectures by Mr Bigirimana to "institute better values and offer them opportunity for complete reform."

The sex workers however, told ministry officials that they can only drop the trade after getting decent income-generating activities.

The 'rehabilitated' sex workers are now setting their eyes on activities such as agriculture, trade, hair dressing and event management as an alternative to their trade, which is despised and abhorred by several cultures.

Sources privy to the meeting revealed that the technocrats dangled several goodies to the sex workers.

Mr Bigirimana, sources say encouraged the sex workers to have faith in government programmes and dismissed fears that they (sex workers) are being excluded from government programmes.

He asked them to drop sex trade and promised to help them get decent income generating activities.

Other senior technocrats at the ministry, who spoke in confidence, said the sex workers are to benefit from the social protection fund, having been classified as vulnerable people.

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