AS OF OCTOBER 2021, 830 SENIOR OFFICERS HAD APPLIED TO AMEND THEIR AGES

OFFICIALS SEEK SH2B FOR AGE-DETERMINING MACHINE

By Dedan Kimathi

The Directorate of Government Analytical Laboratory (DGAL) has asked the Government to allocate it sh2b to enable the purchase of an age-determining machine.

The request was made by Kepher Kateu, the director of DGAL, on Tuesday during a meeting of Parliament's public accounts committee (central), which was presided over by Mawogola South lawmaker Gorreth Namugga (National Unity Platform). Namugga, the committee vice-chairperson, chaired the session in the absence of the chairperson, Muwanga Kivumbi, who was arrested over election violence-related incidents.

Kateu's request came after the Auditor General, Edward Akol, in his 2025 report, wondered why DGAL does not have equipment that can accurately establish a person's age.

"We came to Parliament and requested a budget to enable us acquire equipment that will help us to do forensic analysis. There is an increasing number of cases that arose when the National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) started updating its database. They have been referring these cases to us," he said.

BETWEEN THE LINES

When some of public officers know that they are nearing the retirement, they write to the public service ministry seeking to change their dates of birth.

URGENT TECHNOLOGY NEED

Kateu said the methods that they currently use to establish people's ages are scientific, but not reliable.

"Because we don't have the specialised equipment division, we use the Questioned Document division (QD), where we look at the birth certificate, school or academic documents, baptism records, do the analysis and then establish the age. It is scientific because we look at the age of the ink [on submitted documents]," he explained.

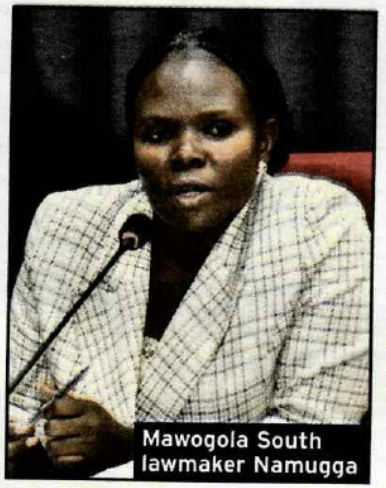
Kateu called for the need to purchase modern equipment to match the changing technology across the world.

He reminded the lawmakers that when Parliament's committee on trade asked DLAG to identify petrol stations that were selling adulterated fuel about three years ago, they almost failed to execute the task because of a lack of specialised machines.

"If it were not for a certain small machine we had acquired, the undertaking would have been jeopardised," Kateu said.

ONE BALLISTICS EXPERT

During the interaction, the lawmakers also learnt that DLAG has only had one firearms and ballistics expert following the retirement of the second officer in the 2022/23 financial year. The information was contained in the AG's report.



Mawogola South lawmaker Namugga

Responding to the query, Kateu asked the lawmakers to provide more funds in the next budget so that more experts can be hired.

"We need to capacitate our people. The one we have right now had to go abroad to train and come back," the director of DGAL said.

LAWMAKERS WELCOME MOVE

Namugga said the purchase of the age-assessment machine is timely and will help to resolve the rampant cases related to age.

"People always come to you [Kateu] to help determine age, yet you lack the [technical] capacity to give them adequate reports. Men are suffering with women who don't want to declare their age," she said.

THE AGE-ADJUSTMENT TECHNIQUES

Under the 1995 Ugandan Constitution, every public servant must retire after clocking 60 years and it is the same for judges of the High Court (65 years) and justices (70 years).

The public service ministry starts notifying employees six months before their retirement age to prepare for their exit, and when they clock the retirement age, the Integrated Personnel and Payroll System (IPPS) automatically deletes their names from the payroll and transfers them to the pension payroll.

To the surprise of the ministry, when some public officers know that they are nearing retirement, they write to the public service ministry seeking to change their dates of birth. "As of October 2021, 830 senior officers had applied to amend their age and we expect the number will reach a thousand," a source at the public service ministry told *New Vision*.

The ministry further informed th some applicants had even gone to court; the applicants mainly being senior officers at the rank of under-secretary, director, commissioner, assistant commissioner and chief administrative officer.

"Most of those seeking to change their age are connected to ministers, Members of Parliament or other influential officers in the country," the source said.

"Most of these also collaborate with rogue elements to remove vital documents from their personal files, especially those related to their actual date of birth and then, they later come to amend their age," the source added.

BAN ISSUED

In July 2025, the Government banned the adjustment of age by civil servants. The ban was announced by Wilson Muruli Mukasa, the public service minister, during a press conference held at the Uganda Media Centre in Kampala. The minister said adjustment of age to remain in Public Service was no longer possible under the Human Capital Development, a digital system introduced to manage public servants.