

Exam body gets extra sh18.6b

By Moses Mulondo

Parliament's budget committee has accepted a request by the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) for the allocation of an additional sh18.6b.

The money is the shortfall of what the Government is supposed to pay UNEB as examination fees for government-sponsored students.

Both the Budget Act and the Public Finance Management Act give Parliament the ultimate power of allocating resources in the national budget.

Appearing before the committee yesterday, Daniel Odongo, the UNEB executive secretary, told the legislators that out of the total sh45.8b that the Government was supposed to pay the examinations body for the sponsored students, only sh27.2b had been provided in the budget, leaving a shortfall of sh18.6b.

Answering a question by the committee chairperson Amos Lugoloobi, Odongo said UNEB collected sh50.3b as examination fees from privately sponsored students.

The UNEB executive secretary said because of the shortfall arising from the Government not paying its full bill for the sponsored students, they were unable to adequately fund their core activities.

"Teachers who mark national exams, supervisors, invigilators and scouts are poorly paid because of the funding gaps. Each invigilator is paid only sh16,000 per day, which includes transport and meals. When invigilators are poorly paid, they can be compromised," Odongo said.

There were reports of leakage of some UNEB examinations which were done last year.

Odongo said compared to other countries in the region, Uganda pays invigilators and teachers who mark exams very poorly.

"Can you imagine for the three weeks they spend marking exams, the teachers who mark the Primary Leaving Examinations only get sh250,000 and those who mark Uganda Certificate of Education examinations are paid sh450,000. This is very little. We need to increase it. In fact, those teachers working on those meagre payments are very patriotic," he stated.

UNEB also requested Parliament sh21b to build a warehouse and containers for storing examinations.



Odongo

SHORTFALL

Daniel Odongo, the UNEB executive secretary, said the money is the shortfall of what the Government is supposed to pay UNEB as examination fees for government-sponsored students.

Odongo said the centre was spending sh500m to hire a warehouse, yet they had land in Kyambogo, on which they would construct one.

He also asked the legislators to intervene in the shortfall on their wage bill, which he said is underfunded.

"The Government wage subvention covers less than 40% of the board's wage requirements and 30% for operational expenses. Since 2004, the Government allocates us only sh600m for operations. Our budget internally generated revenue is sh3b. Our money strictly for running the examination cycle activities," Odongo said.

He also informed the MPs that they had embarked on repealing the UNEB Act for a new one, which would impose tough punishments against people involved in examinations malpractices.

Fred Mwesigye, the Nyabushozi County MP, supported the need to give UNEB more money to fund its pressing needs.

Patrick Nsamba (Kassanda North MP) said: "Because of examinations leakages, stakeholders are beginning to lose confidence in UNEB and that is why many are opting for pre-entry exams. I advise you to ensure that the new law helps you to have better management of the examinations."

The committee chairperson, Amos Lugoloobi, requested Odongo to prepare a breakdown of how they would use the extra sh18.6b so that the committee could use it to justify it in the plenary.