GOVERNMENT PLANNING UNITS GET SH200M FOR CAPACITY BUILDING

By Mary Karugaba

The Government has allocated each planning unit in ministries, departments, agencies (MDAs) and local governments sh100m-sh200m to strengthen planning, budgeting and policy coordination.

According to a new ministry circular dated February 13, addressed to accounting officers, finance ministry departments have been given sh200m, while agencies and local governments have been allocated sh100m each.

According to the finance ministry, there are 156 central government planning units and 176 at local government level. This means that over sh47b has been allocated towards this cause.

Permanent secretary Ramathan Ggoobi said the funds are meant to address weaknesses in planning units, which play a central role in guiding national development priorities.

"The planning units are critical in co-ordinating and managing planning, budgeting, reporting, research and data analysis in MDAs. This ultimately guides policies and decision making. They should be facilitated before quality services are demanded from them," Ggoobi told *New Vision*.

He noted that stalled government projects are a result of poor planning. Ggoobi also said a new planning strategy is being developed to provide solutions to structural and operational challenges that have limited the effectiveness of planning units.

He explained that the strategy will detail measures and provide solutions to some of the challenges impacting efficiency and effectiveness of planning units. While meeting planners recently at Speke Resort Munyonyo, the finance minister (general duties), Henry Musasizi, challenged planners to focus resources on priorities critical to government's socio-economic transformation agenda.

"I want to urge you to be useful planners, who are relevant. There is need to professionalise the planning team to perform effectively and efficiently," he said.

He also asked planners to support government's fight against corruption, eliminate forgeries and curb unnecessary supplementary budget requests.

Ggoobi said institutional plans must align with national development frameworks, including the Tenfold Growth Strategy and National Development Plan.

He cautioned against what he described as common "budget games," including what he called padding play. Padding play refers to requesting more funds than required to justify larger budgets.

COURTESY PHOTO



Participants attending a meeting between the finance ministry and heads of planning units at Speke Resort Munyonyo in August last year



Musasizi



Ggoobi

WHAT ARE PLANNING UNITS FOR?

Planning units serve as specialised components responsible for strategic development planning, resource allocation and policy formulation. Their work ensures that projects and budgets align with long-term national frameworks such as Vision 2040 and successive national development plans.

At the local level, district planning units translate national priorities into district development plans and co-ordinate implementation through technical planning committees.

Planning units also oversee monitoring and evaluation of government programmes, manage data systems used for household profiling, and guide policy formulation within sectors.

PLANNERS SEEK MORE SUPPORT

During the meeting, the chairperson of government planners, Gideon Mugulusi, welcomed the reforms, but called for additional support, including the introduction of a planning conditional grant to sustain activities such as monitoring and evaluation, plus data management.

He also raised concerns about salary disparities and technical capacity gaps affecting planners' performance.

In response, Ggoobi said salary enhancements would be implemented gradually. Dr Asumani Guloba, the director of development planning at the National Planning Authority, argued that strengthening the units is essential to achieving Uganda's broader socio-economic transformation.