

A new survey indicates that sub-county budgets do not provide for gender equality and disability inclusion.

BY ALEX ASHABA

A new assessment by SOS Children's Villages under the Grow Equal Project has revealed limited consideration of gender equality and social inclusion in district action plans and budgets in Kabarole and Kamwenge districts.

The survey reveals gaps that continue to undermine the effective implementation of development programmes.

The assessment, conducted by the Fort Portal Office, covered Harungogo, Hakibaale and Mugusu sub-counties in Kabarole District, as well as Nkoma Katalyeba Sub-county in Kamwenge District.

It found that district and sub-county budgets remain largely general, with few specific allocations for gender and disability-responsive initiatives. As a result, the needs of women, girls and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) are not adequately prioritised.

Ms Damalie Irienge, the Family Strengthening Programme Coordinator at SOS Children's Villages office in Fort Portal, said sub-county budgets do not provide for disability inclusion measures such as accessible infrastructure and inclusive education.

"There are no budget allocations for

Locals push for gender, PWDs-friendly budgets

initiatives that promote women's economic empowerment, such as entrepreneurship programmes, which are centrally implemented. Capacity-building activities to support green economy initiatives are also limited, and resources for gender-responsive interventions at the sub-county level remain inadequate," Ms Irienge said during a dissemination meeting in Fort Portal City last week.

According to the 2024 National Housing Census, 1.4 million persons aged two years and above live with disabilities, representing a prevalence rate of 3.4 percent. Disability prevalence is higher among females (3.6 percent) than males (3.2 percent).

Ms Irienge also revealed that closing the gaps requires the deliberate integration of gender and disability considerations into planning and budgeting processes. She called for budget allocations that reflect the needs of women, girls and PWDs, including funding for accessible infrastructure in public spaces and buildings.

The report also noted that despite ongoing efforts to promote the inclusion of women and girls in climate change and green economy initiatives, less than five percent of the town council

GREEN ECONOMY GAPS

The assessment reviewed the Uganda Green Growth Development Strategy 2017/18-2023/31, which outlines ambitious gender inclusion targets in agriculture, energy, transport and natural resources.

However, the review identified lack of green economy policies and development plans.

budgets in Rwamwanja and Nkoma Katalyeba Sub-county is allocated to gender-related activities.

Women continue to face risks from environmental degradation due to their roles in water collection, subsistence farming and care-giving.

Ms Irienge called for the development and enforcement of local by-laws that promote gender equality and the inclusion of PWDs in the green economy.

"Women-led green initiatives in Uganda face a multi-layered funding crisis. Only five percent of the total budget from the Gender ministry is directed towards gender equality initiatives. Lo-

cal governments are underfunded, including for gender-responsive activities. Our call is for all local governments to allocate at least 10 percent of their development budgets to gender-responsive initiatives," Ms Irienge said.

In Kamwenge District, the assessment identified the absence of a clear framework to ensure consistent engagement with different gender groups, particularly vulnerable women and PWDs. The report recommended increased resource allocation to gender and inclusion initiatives, including training programmes, accessible infrastructure and social protection systems.

In Uganda, the government provides specific grants for women and PWDs through programmes managed at district and local government levels. These include the National Special Grant for PWDs, which provides start-up capital for income-generating activities, and the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP), which offers interest-free credit to women's groups.

However, women and PWDs from the assessed communities said despite government interventions, funding remains limited and few people benefit. They called on district leaders to increase budget allocations.

Ms Sarah Kabonesa, a smallholder farmer from Hakibaale Sub-county in Kabarole District, said women remain excluded from decision-making despite being most affected by climate change.

"We are the ones who fetch water, grow food and care for our families, yet our needs are never reflected in the budgets. When there is drought or flooding, women suffer the most," she said.

In Mugusu Sub-county, Kabarole District, women engaged in informal income-generating activities said limited access to funding and skills training continues to trap them in poverty.

"We hear about green economy projects, but women are rarely trained or supported to benefit. If budgets included funds for women's groups, many of us would start small businesses," said Ms Agnes Nyamwasa, a member of a village savings group.

PWDs also raised concerns about the lack of accessible infrastructure and inclusion in development programmes.

Mr John Turyamureeba, a wheelchair user from Harungogo Sub-county, said exclusion remains a major barrier.

"Public offices and meeting places are not accessible to us. When budgets ignore disability inclusion, it means we are automatically locked out," he said.