

Citizens demand accountability from Bukedi, West Nile leaders

BY MUDANGHA KOLYANGHA

BUKEDI. Residents of Budaka and Kibuku districts are demanding accountability from their leaders.

During a recent engagement with civil society organisations, the residents said they want leaders to account for public funds allocated in the last five years, as several of them seek re-election.

The engagement was held by the Uganda National NGO Forum (UN-NGOF) in collaboration with West Nile Civil Society Network (WECISNET) with support from the European Union. Under the Strengthening Grassroot Social Accountability [SGSA], the national NGO Forum has been implement-

ing a three-year project in Bukedi and West Nile.

Mr Lulenti Wairagala, one of the chairpersons of Topowa group in Lyama Sub-county, Budaka, said the project has empowered citizens to demand accountability.

He added that in the past, few or no residents would report complaints such as rampant absenteeism and late coming by health workers, teachers, among others, to the relevant authorities.

"The public had complained quietly, but no one knew what to do. That changed with the intervention of the project to demand accountability and better service delivery...We didn't know



Impact.

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we had to put pressure and ask the responsible leaders," he noted.

Mr Wairagala, on the responsiveness of duty bearers to citizens' concerns about service delivery at Lyama Health Centre 111, added that there had been improved arrival time of medical staff after a meeting was held over the issue.

"Previously, health workers used to be absent or come late and leave early but of late the situation has totally changed because of the project," he said.

Mr Wairagala further explained that the vice of soliciting money from the patients, especially from pregnant mothers, has stopped. He also said two more beds were delivered by the dis-

trict in February, bringing number of beds to 11.

"Formerly, there had been total outcry from the general public about the rampant extortion of money from patients and as well as shortage of beds but this also changed completely," Mr Wairagala said. He also added that grazing of animals within the health facility stopped after the health management unit committee met neighbours of the facility and improved collaboration between politicians and technical staff.

The Budaka District vice chairperson, Mr Tom Mukono, said the project has reawakened the general public to hold leaders accountable in terms of service delivery. "It has played a key role in empowering citizens to understand their rights, roles, and responsibilities to hold government accountable," he said.

The project has strengthened community accountability structures through increased citizen confidence to demand better services, and also increased citizens' participation in planning and district responsiveness.

The Uganda National NGO Forum Executive Director, Dr Moses Isooba, said the prime objective of the project was

to contribute towards improved capacity of citizens and CSOs to hold government accountable for good governance and service delivery in Bukedi and West Nile sub-regions.

Dr Isooba was speaking at a multi-stakeholders' reflection on SGSA project sustainability under the theme, "Turning SGSA project to practice: Strengthening ownership and sustaining social accountability practices," which was held at Bugwere Communication Centre last week.

"This project was to reawaken the communities through increased citizens' demand for social accountability and good governance, improved representation of local leaders to citizens' demand for good governance and service delivery and as well as increased capacity of CSOs to organise citizen to effectively participate in social accountability," Dr Isooba said.

The project in Bukedi has been implemented in greater Bulangira and Tiriinyi [Kibuku] and greater Kameruka and Lyama [Budaka] whereas in West Nile it was being implemented in Kei and Yumbe Town council [Yumbe] and Tara and Olufe [Maracha].