

Description:

(Question put and agreed to.)

(The House resumed, the Speaker presiding.)

REPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HOUSE

4.03

THE MINISTER OF STATE, LOCAL GOVERNMENT (Mrs Hope Mwesigye): Mr Speaker, I beg to move that the Committee of the whole has considered the Bill entitled, "The Local Governments (Amendment) Bill (No.2) 2007" and has passed with amendments. I beg to move.

MOTION FOR ADOPTION OF THE REPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HOUSE

4.04

THE MINISTER OF STATE, LOCAL GOVERNMENT (Mrs Hope Mwesigye): Mr Speaker, I beg to move that the report from the Committee of the whole House be adopted. I beg to move.

(Question put and agreed to.)

(Report adopted.)

BILLS

THIRD READING

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS (AMENDMENT) BILL (NO.2) 2007

4.05

THE MINISTER OF STATE, LOCAL GOVERNMENT (Mrs Hope Mwesigye): Mr Speaker, I beg to move that a Bill entitled, "The Local Governments (Amendment) No.2 Bill, 2007" be read the third time and do pass. I beg to move.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable members, the motion is that the Bill entitled, "The Local Governments (Amendment) (No.2) Bill, 2007" be read the third time and do pass.

(Question put and agreed to.)

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED,
"THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS (AMENDMENT) NO.2 ACT, 2007".

THE SPEAKER: The Bill is passed; congratulations. (Applause)

PRESENTATION, CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES ON THE PETITION BY THE DEAF PERSONS OF UGANDA

4.07

THE CHAIRPERSON, STANDING COMMITTEE ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES (Ms Jalia Bintu): Mr Speaker and honourable members, allow me to present the report of the Committee on Equal Opportunities, on the petition by the deaf persons of Uganda.

The Uganda National Association of the Deaf, UNAD, petitioned

Parliament through the Rt Hon. Speaker of Parliament on 02 October 2006, over the continued disrespect of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of deaf persons, whose promotion and protection is a matter of priority for the international community and guaranteed by the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, Chapter 4, as amended in 2005.

The Speaker forwarded the matter to the Committee on Equal Opportunities for further investigation and report to the House. As per the requirement of rule 27(5) of the Rules of Procedure of Parliament, the petition was tabled before this House.

Mr Speaker, the committee proceeded by analysing and scrutinising the petition, which was presented to the Speaker by UNAD, and the committee invited and met, among others, the following:

The Chairperson of UNAD and his technical team; the Minister of State for Gender, Labour and Social Development in charge of Elderly and Disability Affairs, the commissioner in charge of the Disability and Elderly Department in the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, the Uganda Child Rights NGO Network, the Minister of Education and Sports and her team, and the Members of Parliament.

UNAD presented a petition for the promotion of the rights of the deaf in the understanding that the promotion and protection of human rights is a matter of priority for the international community and that the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995, as amended in 2005, guarantees most of these rights.

The Uganda National Association of the Deaf's mission is to advocate for the equalisation of opportunities and for the rights of deaf persons in all fields of life: basic higher education, employment, health and social economic welfare. In doing so, UNAD tries to ensure that services developed or to be developed are relevant to the needs of the deaf persons in Uganda.

UNAD's vision is, "Best quality of life for deaf people in Uganda" and its mandate is, "Empowering the deaf through capacity building, advocacy and lobbying."

In presenting the petition, UNAD was also reaffirming its commitment to the purposes and principles contained in the following relevant instruments:

The Charter of the United Nations, 1945; the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966; the International Covenant on Civic and Political Rights, 1966; the Declaration on the Rights of the Child, 1959; the Declaration on the Rights of People With Disabilities, 2000; the standards already set for social progress in the constitutions, conventions, recommendations and resolutions of the International Labour Organisation, 1919; the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 1945; the World Health Organization, 1948; the United Nations Children's Fund, 1946 and the Persons With Disabilities Act, 2006, which among others was enacted to promote the rights of PWDs, including the deaf persons, and taking into consideration the major

changes taking place on the international scene and the aspirations of all deaf persons in Uganda for a national order based on the principles enshrined in this Act and the National Policy on Disability, including the inclusion of such PWDs in key development actors.

Mr Speaker and honourable members, among others, these were the issues raised by the petitioners:

1) According to the Persons with Disabilities' Desk in the Ministry of Health, access to health services by deaf people throughout the country has been hampered by a communication barrier with medical personnel. In other words, the deaf persons are denied adequate access to health services because they cannot effectively communicate with health workers.

2) The petitioners also noted with concern that there is a high illiteracy rate coupled with a high dropout rate from schools by the deaf people, also due to the communication barrier between the deaf students and the teachers. There is lack of sign language skills in institutions of learning. This has not only affected the performance of the deaf students and pupils in these academic institutions, but has also denied them an opportunity to exercise their right to education as enshrined under Article 30 of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, as amended in 2005; and under the Children's Act, 2000.

3) Among the issues, the petitioners asserted that the deaf citizens have limited access to vital information due to the continued absence of sign language interpreters. Mr Speaker, they quoted an example; that most of the television programmes are not interpreted for the deaf viewers and in the end they miss such vital information. Actually, it is surprising that even programmes that are meant for the deaf are not interpreted for them.

The former Uganda Television, which is now UBC, used to provide simultaneous sign language interpretation of the 8 O'clock news at night to the deaf, but when it changed to Uganda Broadcasting Corporation the deaf no longer get such services and yet under the former Uganda Television, UNAD used to provide transport and fees for the interpreters.

4) The petitioners noted that the deaf persons are often excluded from the mainstream of society and denied their human rights. Discrimination against them takes various forms ranging from the denial of opportunities, to segregation and isolation, because of the imposition of physical and social barriers. Effects of disability-based discrimination are particularly severe in such fields as education, employment, housing, transport, cultural life and access to public places and services. This has hindered them from enjoying their right to equality and freedom from discrimination, as enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda.

5) They also noted the limited participation by deaf persons in the decision making process including local government councils, national planning, among others, owing to the communication barrier and absence of sign language interpretation. It is a constitutional right for every Ugandan, they asserted, as a citizen to participate in the affairs of the

government, which right is not exercised by deaf persons because of communication barrier.

6) The next issue raised, Mr Speaker was that the deaf persons are sometimes denied justice. In many instances they are unlawfully arrested and put into detention without trial. Even those who are lawfully arrested are not produced before court within the required time as provided in 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, as amended in 2005. This denies them an opportunity to enjoy their personal right to liberty and fair hearing guaranteed under Articles 23 and 28 of the Constitution respectively.

7) The next issue raised was that poverty alleviation programmes in the country do not even favour the deaf persons. There is no special programme or provision designed specifically for deaf persons and yet there are many deaf people in this country who are living in abject poverty.

8) The last issue raised was the recruitment and selection process for public employees, which also shows that deaf persons are left out and even the few who have managed to complete education fail to get jobs and yet deafness is not inability.

The committee has made the following observations:

(a) Research has not been undertaken to find out the status of the deaf persons in Uganda. The biggest challenge that policy makers have in addressing the needs of deaf persons and other people with disabilities is that they do not know how many they are and where they are in specific terms. The general tendency has been to rely on estimates and surveys, which may not be accurate.

(b) The issue of deaf persons cuts across all ministries and yet only the Ministry of Education and Sports, that of Gender, Labour and Social Development and that of Health have tried to consider the deaf persons as part of their programmes.

(c) There is shortage and high cost of learning materials for pupils with special needs, including the deaf pupils. Many learning materials are imported and are, therefore, expensive.

Mr Speaker, it is pertinent that a deaf pupil owns a sign language manual and a dictionary, which amount to Shs 200,000. And even the low budget allocation for special needs education in the Ministry of Education and Sports makes the acquisition of learning materials for children with disabilities a challenge. So, it is a challenge to the parents also.

(d) It has also been observed that the majority of children with disabilities, including deaf pupils, do not complete their education cycle. One of the reasons cited for this drop out is the shortage of special needs education teachers, the SNE teachers. The remuneration of SNE teachers is not commensurate with the extra work load and, therefore, they resort to other careers or are posted to do other duties in the school system. For example, most of the SNE teachers are posted to administration or when it comes to transferring, they are transferred as and when the administrators decide.

The SNE teachers are also known to be the first to be struck of the payroll. So, it is not considered prudent to stick to it. This implies that there are very few special needs education teachers in schools to facilitate learning by children with

disabilities or to guide schools in the purchase of learning materials or to help in making learning materials locally.

(e) The absence of sign language on major news bulletins on national and private television stations has denied deaf persons their right to access information and yet Section 21 of the PWDs Act, 2006 states: "A sign language inset should be provided for news broadcasts."

Due to the communication barrier, the deaf persons find it difficult to access justice in the courts of law and places of worship among others. Mr Speaker, when we were interacting with the petitioners, we were given an example where the deaf persons who are at times raped fail to get justice as expected due to the communication barrier with the Police and the security personnel. This is a big challenge, and an issue.

(f) The committee observes that there is limited access to health services by deaf people throughout the country due to the communication barrier with medical personnel.

(g) The committee points out that policies on people with disabilities are generalized and do not cater for the special needs of each category for example, the blind, the dumb or physically handicapped persons among others.

(h) The committee further notes that there is no fixed policy on sign language to address issues that arise from communication needs of deaf persons and yet there is a legal and constitutional obligation as outlined in objective 24(c) of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, as amended in 2005.

(i) The committee further observes that deaf persons have limited access to information including that of public or national nature. The service of sign language interpreters from news broadcasts from television stations does not exist contrary to the provisions of section 21(2)(a) of the Persons With Disabilities Act, 2006 on access to information by deaf persons. For example, Mr Speaker, as I stated earlier in the petitioners' presentation, Uganda Broadcasting Corporation scraped sign language interpretation from news broadcasts yet UNISE used to pay their transport and interpretation fees.

Recommendations

Mr Speaker and honourable members, the committee wishes to make these recommendations in light of the observations and the issues that were raised by the petitioners:

(1) In light of the national objective 24(C) and Article 35(2) of the Constitution, the committee strongly recommends that government should enact a national sign language policy, which will be used to promote development of sign language in all service sectors both public and private. And sign language is used in most of the countries worldwide.

(2) The committee recommends that special training in sign language should be included and effected in the curriculum of all training institutions both public and private so that those who qualify from these institutions will be able to meet the needs of the deaf persons.

(3) Emphasis should be laid on prioritising production and purchase of learning materials for children with disabilities from within the country. And guidelines should be given to ensure that learning materials purchased cater for all categories of children with disabilities, including the deaf pupils.

(4) The committee wishes to recommend that the People with Disabilities Desk in the Ministry of Health and other relevant institutions needs to be reinstated in order to deal with the problem of communication and sign language, using a multi-sectoral approach. The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development should spearhead efforts to maintain issues of deaf persons in relevant ministries and departments.

(5) The committee recommends that government should initiate and carry out research on people with disabilities so that there is available information to enable inclusion of PWDs' concerns in all policies and programmes of the government, for example, the Bonna Bagaggawale and HIV/AIDS programmes.

(6) The committee recommends that there is need to enhance the inclusion of people with disabilities and their concerns in all government organs and structures. The representation of PWDs should be extended beyond the current focus on representation into the political organs, to all constitutional and other bodies as per objective VI of the Constitution. Such representation will go a long way in enabling PWDs to influence decision making and implementation at all levels.

(7) The committee further recommends that all television news broadcasts should have a sign language inset for interpretation for deaf persons, as per Section 21 of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2006; and this should be reinstated on Uganda Broadcasting Corporation immediately at no cost to UNAD. Mr Speaker, when we were interacting with the ministers, we were assured that UBC would reinstate the sign language interpreters but to date, we have been keenly watching television and this programme has not been reinstated. So, deaf persons have been at a loss all along.

(8) The committee further recommends that the government should reinstate sponsorship for the Diploma in Sign Language Interpretation at Kyambogo University and other institutions and related disability programmes, which were phased out by the government. Honourable members, you are aware that UNISE, which used to fund this programme of PWDs' teachers, phased out; and this programme has not been on for some time.

(9) Lastly, the committee recommends that ministerial policy statements from all ministries should reflect the needs of PWDs on an annual basis. This will help Members of Parliament and Parliament as an institution to closely oversee and follow up implementation of these recommendations and other concerns pertaining to people with disabilities in this country. This recommendation if upheld, I know, will go ahead in helping this august House especially on all the recommendations that we make, to be able to assess how far the government has gone in adhering to the recommendations we make.

In conclusion, the committee requests this House to uphold the above mentioned recommendations with special emphasis on

the last recommendation, to enable Parliament follow up or monitor their implementation.

Mr Speaker, attached is the petition, which I laid on the Table for the Members to look through. I beg to move. Thank you.

4.28

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR ELDERLY AND DISABILITY AFFAIRS (Mr Suleiman Madada): Mr Speaker and colleagues, Members of Parliament, I want to begin by thanking the committee for this good report they have presented. Of course we had an opportunity to interact with them and ever since our interaction with them, government has taken some steps that I wish to report here. We are also committed to ensuring that we have a very enabling environment which is disability friendly; which is based on our Constitution as per Articles 21, 32 and 35 but also in regard to the international legal instruments on issues with disability.

I want to state here that under issues of education, as a move to operationalise the constitutional provision of Article 35, regarding sign language, the following has been instituted:

All ongoing curriculum reviews demand that sign language be integrated in the curriculum. Sub-sectors already addressing this concern include: the primary sub-sector, the secondary sub-sector and the teacher education sub-sector. Modalities to have all learners with hearing problems take all disciplines are being explored.

Support services include: inclusion of school units of the deaf of secondary school level as centres of expertise, are being developed.

Procurement of sign language manuals for all special schools and units is also in progress. Coordinating centre schools and centre coordinating tutors have received these manuals.

Phased in-training programmes in sign language for CCTs are being run and developed in various centres in the country.

A sign language curriculum has been developed by Kyambogo University, Faculty of Special Needs and Rehabilitation to train teachers who might wish to specialise in sign language. This training is ongoing and is provided at certificate and diploma level.

As for the health sector, it is true that we have a desk to handle disability health issues. And when you revise the Health Sector Strategic Plan II 2005/2006 to 2007/2010, chapter four, bullet 4(2): injuries and disability rehabilitation centres, we have specific targets under that sector to reduce hearing impairment from 105 to 85. We should also reduce visual impairment from the estimated 1.2 to 0.8 percent. We also want to reach 80 percent of the population with messages on disability prevention and rehabilitation among others.

Under the functional adult literacy programme, we are providing for sign language interpreters for persons with hearing difficulties.

At the level of decision making in local governments, my

ministry has made consultations with the Minister of Local Government. Sign language interpreters will be trained to assist deaf councillors at various levels of decision-making. This arrangement will enable the deaf to influence decision making at various levels.

We also wish to state that in terms of a national policy on sign language, we think that the government should review – and we are in the process of reviewing the national policy on disability, and issues of sign language will be emphasised to ensure that all service providers promote sign language for the benefit of deaf persons. Section 4(8), which talks about communication in this policy, promotes the use of sign language. And since we have a multiplicity of disabilities, we believe that once we revise this national policy on disability and emphasise the issue of sign language, we would have addressed the concern of sign language.

My ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, has embarked on developing guidelines for the implementation of the national policy on disability issues. Deaf persons will be mainstreamed to ensure that each stakeholder plays its role in terms of improving communication skills by service providers.

Government is also working out strategies to ensure that issues of PWDs are fully mainstreamed in all development programmes such as Bonna Bagaggawale, HIV/AIDS, and others. Government has embarked on mobilisation of vulnerable groups, including deaf persons, to form SACCOs for Bonna Bagaggawale. The deaf will be among the PWDs to access micro finance once they join the SACCOs that we are mobilising them to join.

Linkages are also being made with other micro finance institutions to ensure that the deaf, among other PWDs, access support.

The Community Based Rehabilitation Programme, (CBRP) which is being implemented by my ministry emphasises economic empowerment of all PWDs, including the deaf persons.

Also to give effect to the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2006, Section 44, regulations are being developed to operationalise this Act. For instance, Section 21 of this Act concerns access to information; if put in practice, this would go a long way in promoting communication through sign language.

As for the TV programmes, one of the areas we found missing is that we had not developed the regulations for the PWDs Act, 2006 to allow us enforce the requirement. My ministry is working on ensuring that these regulations and guidelines are in place such that we can impress upon all televisions to ensure that this requirement is put in place. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you honourable minister.

MR ARUMADRI: Mr Speaker, you must have realised that the minister has just made a ministerial statement and it would be prudent that we get copies of what he has said.

4.35

MR LIVINGSTONE OKELLO-OKELLO (UPC, Chua County,

Kitgum): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I have been associated with the persons with disabilities since 1991. I chair an NGO, which looks after children with mental disabilities. We are all candidates of disability; until you die, you remain a candidate. I have realised over the years that the biggest bottleneck is the stigma. Our people do not understand disability. In some families, children with disabilities are hidden when visitors come. They are treated as a curse. The first battle should be to sensitise our people to fight this stigma so that we get the whole country to accept disability because as I said, we are all candidates.

Last year I accompanied Members of parliament representing persons with disabilities in this House to a study tour of the USA, for one month. Out there, people have accepted disability. They have modified their buildings and public transport so that even somebody on a wheel chair can just enter a bus and their area in the bus is reserved. But look at what is happening here; these matatus of ours! Even if somebody is disabled could enter, because of the struggle, you will remain out. They push you away. We have to do a lot to ameliorate the situation of persons with disabilities in this country.

Look at our public buildings including this one; until the last Parliament, MPs for persons with disabilities used to suffer here. They could not go upstairs before the lifts were put in place. Go upcountry; people in wheelchairs come and wait on the ground floor for the officers who sit upstairs. When the officers come; they are tired and bypass them there on the ground floor. I witnessed this in my own district because there is no facility to go up. You come with your wheel chair and sit there to wait for an officer until he is coming down. You sit there for hours and then in the end you are not attended to.

What we should do is to look at this Disabilities Act again and maybe give a deadline to the country so that all public buildings are modified to give accessibility to people with disabilities. It is their entitlement. They should access these public officers; they should access information in those buildings.

I would like to thank UNAID for the petition but this petition is not for the deaf persons only. It is for all types of disabilities because all of them suffer.

Our government – I thank the minister for his statement but the government is not doing enough. When we built a home for these children in Busega, that was about ten years ago, we invited a minister to open that children's home. We put in a request and we tried to follow it up - we wanted some contribution from the government because in the Western world, people with disabilities are not put in public homes. They are put in small places in a homely atmosphere. Some of them do recover. When you dump them in a public home, you are destroying them. But here, our government apparently considers spending funds on children with disabilities as a waste of resources. This is unfortunate! It should not be the case because everybody has their own gifts. Some of these people could turn out to be future leaders, even presidents of this country, but they are being denied the opportunity to develop their talents just by the way they look. I think this is very unfortunate and the government should do more than what the minister has told us.

Public sensitisation must be embarked on so that we do not waste human resources the way we are doing. I support the petition but urge that quick action be taken rather than speak and we just leave it there.

4.42

MR LATIF SEBAGGALA (DP, Kawempe Divison North, Kampala): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I would like to thank the chairperson and the committee for this good report. The issues concerning disabled people in this country must be supported by all people, especially Members of Parliament. As you are aware, all of us are potential members of NUDIPU, that is, we are potential people with disabilities. As we come from our homes and go back to our different homes, in between, you can go back a disabled person. So, we need to support issues raised by these organisations.

When the chairperson was presenting he talked about special training schools for the disabled. These special training schools are very important and indeed they are lacking in many parts of this country and yet I think the number of disabled people is becoming bigger every day. So, it is my humble request that the government comes in, perhaps at sub-county level, because there are some districts which do not even have a single school for the disabled. These districts are there. An MP is telling me Karamoja and other districts, so I think it is imperative that the government puts in place mechanisms where these schools for the disabled can be at least in every district and if our resource envelope allows, then we can even go to sub-counties.

I would like to know from the honourable minister: we are now living in a global village, in a world of dot.com. What programme do you have as far as ICT is concerned especially as regards to the disabled? Because, there is no way we can talk about advancement and not talk about ICT. What is your special programme for the people of this nature?

Mr Speaker, on the Bonna Bagagawale programme, the minister has talked about the disabled people accessing resources of the Bonna Bagagawale programme. I think it is good to hear that. Indeed when we talk about Bonna Bagagawale - even in our constituencies the electorate are on our backs that they have heard about Bonna Bagagawale for so many months or so many days - I suggest that if the government is finding some problems in the implementation of Bonna Bagagawale at least let this programme begin with the disabled.

Let us have a special programme for the disabled so that they are empowered and this money is first channeled to organisations of this kind. Because I think if we move step-by-step and then we see how the Bonna Bagagawale programme has been implemented by the disabled, we will have reason to celebrate.

Also, when we talk about the disabled, I think even the elderly or the aged are among the disabled. However, to my disappointment and dismay, there are so many old people down there who have lost all their relatives - their sons and daughters - and are suffering with young ones. Some of their sons and daughters have died as a result of AIDS. You find an

old lady aged 70 or 80 suffering with the young ones.

When we visit other countries, even here in Africa, you find homes for the elderly. I think our government can have a pilot study so that we pick out various districts from our traditional regions and we have those homes for the aged in those districts so that we can see. Because they continue to be very useful to our country but at times you find them in various localities when they are not in a position to assist themselves and yet at this particular time, that is when the government must come in to support those people who are aged.

The disabled also have an organisation, NUDIPU or the National Union of Disabled People, but we have heard on several occasions that this organisation has, I think, kind of leadership struggles and conflicts. I do not know whether the minister has taken a step to find out why? This is because this is the organisation, which is supposed to cater for the interests of all the disabled people but we have been approached - I personally have been approached by disabled people in my constituency, saying that NUDIPU does not live to its expectations and that there are a lot of power struggle and conflicts. Others are saying that they are sidelined. So I think the minister could take a step to find out - because if we strengthen NUDIPU so that it becomes the flag-bearer and therefore becomes a very strong institution, I think – (Interruption)

MS BINTU: I would like to inform hon. Sebaggala that this House, of course in the previous Parliament, put in place the National Disability Council. So, possibly those people who are within NUDIPU may not be falling under the National Council for People with Disabilities. They need to visit the National Council for People with Disabilities and even to consult the Act on what it stipulates, like the roles of the National Council for People with Disabilities, before entering into the roles of the national council.

MR SEBAGGALA: Thank you very much for that good information. I am just requesting the honourable minister that we all know that NUDIPU has been here for so many years and we know that it has tried to support people with disabilities. So, if they have some problems, it is the responsibility of the minister to find out why and see how those people can be assisted. With those few words, Mr Speaker, I thank you very much and I support the motion.

4.51

MRS FLORENCE EKWAU (FDC, Woman Representative, Kaberamaido): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. In fact if there is any other thing worth dying for, then this is one of them. On this I send my regards to our honourable colleagues, most of whom got accidents last year, but have fought and tried very hard to move and continue coming to this House. They deserve credit. So as we think for others outside there, at the back of our minds we should know that we can be one of these any time.

I will now go to my observations on page 6 where the committee observed that they do not know the number of people with disabilities. In fact, Uganda as a country does not know the number of people with disabilities. I give this task to the minister. This shows a lot of non-seriousness! We have very

many technocrats in this country and these are some of the things that should be taken up and more seriously so. We have the census reports that are already in place. These should help at least the ministry to follow up in ascertaining the number of people with disabilities that we have in the country. So, this goes to the minister. It ought to be followed up and taken as a matter of urgency and great concern.

I have another observation as per the committee's report on this petition. On page 7, there is a shortage and high cost of learning materials. In fact these learning materials are very expensive. The ministry should come up with a policy and make sure that either through donor support and development partners or well-wishers outside there, the children who are disabled go to school and they can afford these learning materials. Please, take this up.

I know very many people who would be willing to help even within the country. If some funds were sourced, most people would be willing to come up and give a helping hand. The minister should take this up and make sure that things like dictionaries and other manuals and the type writers that I see them using, are given to some schools. This would go a long way in helping the disabled children, especially the blind.

And then concerning the teachers, if you see the nature of the workload of the teachers we have in this country, what they go through: lack of accommodation among others, when it comes to the case of the special needs, then I do not know what happens. Honourable minister, we urge and beg you that you should take this as a priority. You can imagine what a teacher goes through to bring out a child who does not have any defect. Think about a child with a disability. It becomes a very great problem and so such teachers should be given special attention. In fact schools of the deaf and schools of the blind should be given priority. The teachers should be given the necessities. Talk of accommodation; their salaries should be well catered for and should be something quite motivating because it is not easy to bring up a child with a disability. You really need a lot more input compared to these other children.

As per the recommendations of the committee, I thank the chairperson and the members of this committee so much. The first recommendation touched on the national policy. Our government should accept this and take this in good faith. The issue of coming up with policies on very many other aspects is not so much well taken up by government. I urge the chairperson of this committee to keep on pressing government until this policy is in place. Otherwise, you will keep on singing until you end the Eighth Parliament without having the Disability Policy in place; not even for the national sign language policy. We will leave this place without getting this. If we could push for this, at least this Parliament would be commended for work well done. I thank you very much.

4.57

MR WILSON NOKRACH (NRM, Persons with Disabilities): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I want to also thank the chairperson and the committee for coming up with very nice recommendations. If all these recommendations can be implemented, there will be no more petition because it would have answered all the questions that disabled people would want to ask. I want to thank the

minister for the sweet words he has mentioned and I believe he was not defending. I know him very well; he is a hard working minister. All that he has said is being done and I really request him to see that if there are areas that are not being implemented, he should really put it forward and let it be done.

I want to appeal to the Minister of Information, who is not here, through the Prime Minister, that the issue of introduction of sign language on TV should be given a timeframe. Deaf people are missing out on what is going on. They are missing a lot of information and I think this is not good. I appeal seriously that this should be done with immediate effect so that the sign language in question is seen on TV.

I want to appeal to the Minister of Public Service: if possible, there should be establishment for employment of sign language interpreters in all sectors so that all deaf people get adequate services. There are so many problems that the deaf people are facing. I want to give one example of a deaf lady who almost died in a labour ward due to lack of communication. She could not communicate effectively with the health workers. They were shouting at her, "Push, push, push," but she could not understand. And at the end, the health workers were saying, "If you knew you were deaf, why did you go for it?" I think we need to be more serious and handle these cases as quickly as possible so that the human rights of deaf people are respected and things are taken on seriously.

I want to thank the committee again for the work well done. We are waiting to see the implementation of the recommendations.

Mr Speaker, before I sit down, I want to appeal to Parliament that in the parking yards, there are maps where disabled people should park their cars. Many times I come with my car and find that people have already parked there. There are two on the northern side and two on the southern side. If you are in America, you would be paying a fine of US \$200 for parking in that area.

So, please, I appeal to you let the good example starts from us. I think they have marked it clearly for us because they know we cannot park our cars far away and walk to the House. And sincerely, the implementation of such ideas should start from the law markers like ourselves. I thank you for listening to me.

5.00

MS LOI KIRYAPAWO (NRM, Budaka County, Pallisa): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I would like to commend the committee for this good report. I know we have various programmes. I want to look at "Bona Basome" (UPE) and "Bona bagagawale" and I am sure in this modern world, if one is not educated, it is difficult to improve your financial status. When you look at UPE, you look at children with disabilities; I know the children who have limb problems can cope in schools with other children. But when it comes to children who are deaf and those who are blind, it becomes difficult. I think we need to have priority among the priorities.

When the committee says we do not know the numbers of our people who are living with disabilities, it is absurd. You cannot plan for people when you do not know how many they are. We

have to come up with a census in order to know how many people we have who are with disabilities. We have to know what types of disabilities; how many they are for us to plan properly for them. Otherwise, as the minister is saying we shall have good policies but when it comes to planning for people whom you do not know I do not think you can make headway.

So, I am appealing to government surely to consider having special schools for those special cases of people with disabilities especially those who need sign language, those who are blind to have those schools. If we knew the numbers, then we would know where the numbers are high so that that is where we put such schools. Because if we say in every district, you might find that one district has more numbers and another one fewer numbers. So, we need to know and then specifically come up with a policy, with a structure to see that we are catering for everybody.

I am also adding my voice that we are people who are moving with disabilities. Right now, in this Parliament we have our colleagues who have been moving well but right now they have joined that club. So, we have to look into this. In fact, in developed countries, people who are looking after children with disabilities are paid some allowance by their governments because it is not easy to bring up a child with disability.

We also have those who have mental disabilities. How will you put such a child together with a normal child? He is lucky he has everything but it is difficult for him to cope with that situation.

So, my main issue is to appeal to government to be serious and we look into these things but starting with a census to know the numbers of people with disabilities whom we have and what types of disabilities. Each category we must know the numbers for us to plan for them. I thank you and I thank the committee.

5.05

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH (Dr Stephen Mallinga): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I would also like to congratulate the committee for a very comprehensive paper, except that I think the approach would have been broader. We tended to emphasis deafness rather than disability as a broad –

THE SPEAKER: No, the reason is that it is people who are deaf that petitioned, for us to address their plight.

DR MALLINGA: Even then, Mr Speaker, I think the committee should have taken the effort to broaden it. Anyhow, as Members of Parliament, we have a challenge. A lot of the disabilities, which we witness in this country, are actually preventable; deafness is preventable, it could be a result of measles for which we have got to be grateful to this government. There used to be wards in almost every hospital where we had measles but those wards have been closed. It is our responsibility as Members of Parliament to make sure that our citizens continue with immunisation.

I was shocked the other day when I went to Namirembe with a German lady – you know there is a form of measles called German measles, Rubella. In Namirembe there is an eye and ear clinic there. They see 300 cases of German measles every

year. German measles causes deafness and causes blindness. If the mother gets the disease when she is pregnant the child will be born with these disabilities. And it can be prevented by immunisation. We are trying to introduce what they call Measles Mumps and Rubella (MMR) immunisation. So, it is our responsibility as leaders to sensitise our population maybe take off some time as you are campaigning -(Interruption)

MR OKELLO-OKELLO: I thank the minister for giving way. Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is true that some of the causes of disabilities can be prevented by immunisation but I am seeking clarification from the minister whether disabilities like blindness, deafness and others can be immunised against. (Laughter)

DR MALLINGA: That is exactly what I was telling you. Rubella causes blindness; Rubella causes deafness; Rubella causes heart condition. We are going to introduce immunisation against that. So, it is up to us to encourage-Regular measles can cause blindness and also deadness but we are grateful to the present government in that as I mentioned wards have been closed.

Polio is a major cause of disability. By encouraging our people to go for immunisation, we can reduce it. Malaria, by encouraging our people to go for treatment as early as possible - we now have home based treatment in almost every village - you should encourage the mothers to go for treatment at once.

A lot of brain damage and retardation is caused by malaria. So, if we encourage our people to go for early treatment for every condition; in every sub county now in this country there is a Health Centre III, where immunisation is carried out and treatment and even safe delivery.

The major cause of mental disability is severe lack of oxygen in the process delivery. These can be prevented by encouraging our mothers to go for antenatal classes and also to deliver in health centres, which are all over the place now. Almost every sub county in the country has a Health Centre III where obstetrics is offered. But you find that almost 50 per cent of the mothers in the country still deliver in the countryside by unskilled attendants. (Interruption)

MS WINIFRED KIIZA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would like to thank the minister for guiding us to educate our communities and sensitise them to go to the health facilities. But we are all aware that most of these health facilities lack actually the adequate facilities to handle most of our mothers. Most of them are non-functional. If I may give you a living example of the hospitals, talk of the mothers for example in Kasese district. We have hospitals where people can sufficiently deliver from; that is Bwera, Kagando and Kilembe hospitals. Those are the hospitals I am talking about but all of them are on lower lands.

The mothers in the mountains cannot sufficiently and adequately get the services of those institutions. We do not have an ambulance in the district, and in the mountains the women will have to travel to access those facilities. What do I tell such mothers? And when do they access these facilities? The ministry is trying but a lot is required and a lot is still desired in the ministries.

I have to assure you, Minister, that a lot still needs to be desired. We shall tell the mothers to go to the facilities but where are they? The doctors are not well paid, the doctors are not there. Even the drugs are not there. So, Minister as you encourage us to reduce the disabilities in this country through accessing these health facilities, still a lot needs to be desired.

We would like to thank you Chairperson of the Committee on Equal Opportunities, but sincerely a lot needs to be done in ensuring that our population in terms of disabilities is catered for. That is the information I wanted to pass on to the minister.

DR MALLINGA: I sat down on information. Since they brought up the issue of hospitals, almost every health institution has somebody there, especially obstetrics. We have mid- wives at every Health Centre III, but as I mentioned the utilisation is very low at this stage when we have a Health Centre III at every sub county. The number of deliveries in the institutions is less than 50 per cent. It is between 30 and 40 per cent.

Therefore, it becomes- Members of Parliament- some of us complain a lot. We do not realise how much has been done by this government as far as providing healthcare is concerned. Polio is history; guinea worm is history; measles almost history. Where else – who else ever provided such services? (Applause)

Mr Speaker, I would like to end by encouraging Members of Parliament to oversee government projects in their constituencies. Make sure that medicines are not stolen. We are still losing over half the medicines we send out and you complain about medicines. You have to oversee your clinics to make sure there are functional. I get surprised when I reach some clinics and notice that refrigeration was packed up long time ago and Members of Parliament have not taken any step. If we are going to reduce disabilities, please let us utilise the health services we have in our areas. Thank you, sir.

5.17

MS ANN AURU (NRM, Woman Representative, Moyo): Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the Committee on Equal Opportunities for the observations and recommendations, which they have come up with. I also want to thank the minister for his remarks. However, I would like to observe that government should do more than what it is doing currently.

I come from a district, which has a blind annex, that is Moyo District and it caters for the blind in other regions surrounding Moyo. They are eighteen blind children from primary one to primary seven and there is only one teacher for these children. So, one wonder how one teacher can effectively cover all those classes! It has been mentioned in the report of the committee that there is lack of training materials and precisely that is what is happening.

I have been talking to the headmistress and she says by next term she might have to just close because of lack of materials and lack of teachers. So, it is very important that government really comes in forcefully and empowers them. Also, I want to appeal -(Interruption)

5.19

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND SPORTS (MS Namirembe

Bitamazire): Mr Speaker, I thank my colleague for giving way. The story of educating children with disabilities in this country is quite long. But what I want to inform Members through you is that government has done very well so far, because by the time government came into power, the Movement and then NRM, and by the time UPE was launched, there were less than 100 children with disabilities in schools. It is during this regime that the children with disabilities have been encouraged to go to school. (Applause)

And as you will recall, UPE is now running for the eleventh year, but we have got over 300,000 children with disabilities.

I would like to concur with hon. Okello-Okello that we need to sensitize the population of Uganda about the education and development of people with disabilities. So, the message I am giving to my colleague is that this is a new experience where we have covered a lot of ground.

Regarding the teachers, young people do not want to go in for specialised teaching of peoples with disabilities. Teaching is already hard enough and as the report says, teaching children with disabilities is even more difficult. And right now, we do not have a mechanism of forcing young people to take up that special education. What we have done, in primary teacher's courses –(Interruption)

MS AKELLO: Thank you Mr Speaker and Minister for giving me way. I did not know that you were giving information. I want to give you information as far as these children with disabilities are concerned. Last year, Members of Parliament on the Forum for Children went around Kampala. We visited schools that have children with disabilities. We discovered that there are some teachers who support these children in disability schools, but the Ministry of Education is not catering for their payment. They are referred to Ministry of Health. When they go there, they are told that Ministry Health is also not responsible that they are supposed to belong to Ministry of Education. So, this is the kind of dilemma that befalls these teachers. So we need a solution to this problem. Thank you.

MS BITAMAZIRE: Mr Speaker, I note that information, but I continue to say that we are organising programmes for all teach training colleges, so that whoever gets a certificate in Primary Teacher Education gets some elementary knowledge, and where need be, specialised training for handling children with disabilities.

But another dilemma we are having, and I believe this might be the one facing my colleague from Moyo, is that teachers do not want to go up country. We have a problem deploying teachers, especially the specialised teachers in up-country stations.

So, I would like to conclude by saying that we have done very well and we shall continue trying our best. Right now, we have planned to construct four regional schools for children with disabilities. We have completed one at Wakiso; we are in the process of constructing one in Mbale, another in Gulu and another in the Western Region, so that we start with four regional comprehensive schools for children with disabilities before we can put one in each district if resources permit.

So, I would like to say that please sensitize our parents; even up to now, when the schools are next door, they still do not think they should take those children to school. I think we are doing well, but you also continue supporting these children with disabilities. Thank you.

MS AURU: Thank you hon. Minister for that information. But when I give facts and figure on persons with disability in my constituency that does not mean that I want to undermine government's effort in supporting the persons with disability. I do recognise their work and I know what this government has done all in the field of education.

The information I give here is important because it will give the Minister for Education and the persons with disability a challenge to maybe pay a visit to Moyo District and assess whether what I am saying is a fact or not. So that is my appeal; government should come out more strongly and support these people.

Finally, I also want to appeal to government to support us MPs when we lobby in support of persons with disability, for instance, in my district, I have lobbied for 51 wheel chairs from Rotary Club of Jinja and I want to commend them for that; not only them, but also NGOs, which have been playing a crucial role in support of the PWD in this country.

But when my honourable colleague and I we went to Ministry of Gender to ask for transport for these wheel chairs, we were told that unless we service a lorry and fuel it up, and get ourselves a driver. I think that is ridiculous. I really appeal for that support. If I hire a commercial vehicle, it would not be less than Shs 1.5 million, which I am unable to do myself. Thank you very much.

5.25

MR JAMES BYANDALA (NRM, Katikamu County North, Luweero): Thank you very much Mr Speaker, and I thank the chairperson for the report. Mr Speaker and honourable members imagine producing a child who is dumb and terribly lame – imagine the stigma you go through. It is so terrible and I appeal to government to go an extra mile in this aspect because it is terrible having a child who cannot walk and all that.

But having said that, I would not like us to paint a picture that if somebody is disabled, then the situation is helpless; we must encourage them that being disabled is not being hopeless - you can do a lot; you can excel in many things.

In my constituency, I have a lame person with hardly any legs. But this gentleman has three beautiful wives. He accepted this and he has made it positive, he has not shown it to be as a situation of helplessness. Again, I have also seen this man on TV, who has no legs being disqualified from competing in Olympics. These are the sort of things that we need to encourage them to do to show that being disabled is not being helpless. They need encouragement to see that they move on well.

But, Mr Speaker, there are things which are bothering me in this report. They say here that when they go to hospitals, they do not access real assistance from the medical personnel. Then what struck my mind is that there are more babies than dumb

people whom the doctors handle; the babies cannot talk, but they handle them some how. So can't there be a change in the curriculum for these doctors who handle children who cannot handle the elderly who cannot talk? Can't it be a specialised area?

Mr Speaker, without being an alarmist, we read in the report that disabled people are always in cells. Is it the norm? Can we say that each time you go the cells you find these people unfairly locked up? If it is a one off, yes, but you see when you put it in a report that they are denied justice by being kept in cells for a long time, it paints a very bad picture –
(Interruption)

MR NDEEZI: Thank you hon. Member, for giving way. Right now I have a list of 40 deaf persons who are in prison and have never been produced in court for trial. If you want, I can bring it tomorrow and lay it on Table. I thank you.

MR ARUMADRI: Mr Speaker, can hon. Ndeezi clarify to the House whether these deaf people have not been brought to Court just because of their disability, or it is a general practice of the sitting government that people should not be brought to court?

MR NDEEZI: I am happy to answer this question. They are in cells because our courts do not provide sign language interpretation services; they are in cells because the police cannot communicate with them; and they cannot be brought to court because the Judges and Magistrates cannot communicate with them. Those are the reasons; I hope it is understood.

MR BYANDALA: Mr Speaker, as I conclude there has also been, in the report, a lot about the absence of sign language interpreters. What strikes me is the fact that in the many travels I have made, I hardly saw the provision of sign language services out side there. I do not know whether the committee ever tried to find out a lot about this. Otherwise, this problem is not only here; it is in other countries like in Europe, Asia and so forth. There are not many sign language interpreters on television in those places.

Finally, Mr Speaker –(Interruption)

MS BINTU: I want to inform the hon. Member that, as he has rightly stated, if you travel in a plane, the sign language interpreters will be there to show you how the safety mechanisms, which you are supposed to undertake, work. So, hon. Member, those are international standards. Thank you.

MR RUHINDI: Mr Speaker, I want to take advantage of this interjection, but in a way responding to a very serious matter raised by hon. Ndeezi.

Normally, when such situations arise – and that is why we are in this Parliament, bring it up because the Judiciary cannot come and defend itself here. We are the responsible persons to do that. Considering the magnitude of the problem he has raised, I would urge him to get in touch with me soonest so that we can actually have a visit to the Principal Judge and follow up this matter as expeditiously as possible.

MR BYANDALA: Mr Speaker, as I conclude, I appreciate the information given by the chairperson, but mine was more on a larger scale because there are very few people who travel by plane.

Mr Speaker, there was a programme conducted by the Ministry of Education on special needs education. I do not know how far it went, but there is nothing talked about it in the report yet it was so comprehensive and I thought it had produced so many teachers to handle the special needs education. Maybe, the minister will clarify on that. I thank you very much.

5.34

MR NYEKO OCULA (FDC, Kilak County, Gulu): Thank you, Mr Speaker for giving me this opportunity. Let me, first of all, thank the Committee on Equal Opportunities for coming up with these focused recommendations. I was on the Committee on Equal Opportunities when it was being instituted and I think the current committee has moved quite a good distance.

Mr Speaker, my first concern is about the delay in handling petitions to Parliament. If you look at this report, you realise that this petition to Parliament was brought on the 2^o October 2006 and now we are in 2008.

Mr Speaker, by the time a group of persons appeals to Parliament, it means they are in dire need for some answers. I would request that what you did yesterday to the petition from the tenants of the Buganda Road flats should set a precedent that petitions to Parliament take, at most, about one month to be handled.

Secondly, Mr Speaker, when we talk about this petition vis-avis disability concerns, I must say that the change in mind set should begin from this House. I am saying this because we are representatives of the people. So, once the mind set is changed from here, definitely society will also change over time to embrace the problem of disability. Even within this Chamber, if you to talk about accessibility by disabled persons, you realise that it is quite difficult. I think you always see how I struggle to enter here; it is not simple. So, the change should actually start from here because there are even toilets in this building where no body can enter with a wheelchair.

Thirdly, Mr Speaker, all the Members of Parliament somehow, somewhere represent persons who are deaf. My question is, how Members of Parliament communicate to these people when canvassing votes. What I am saying is that let all Members of Parliament also learn sign languages and those interested can go to a very good school in Ntinda. This will help them to communicate with the deaf people when canvassing votes.
(Applause)

Finally, Mr Speaker, I listened very keenly to hon. Madada when he was submitting and indeed as hon. Nokrach said, all the words were very nice. However, I must say one thing that it is not very important to come to Parliament with very nice words and yet there is no practicability on the ground. All the nice words that are said here should be transformed into action.

Mr Speaker, I doubt the minister when he says that government is in position to provide sign language interpreters

at all decision-making levels. I do not think that is very possible. First of all, I know for sure that providing sign language interpreters is very expensive because you have to train two people at a go; the interpreter and the person you are interpreting to.

If government was really serious about handling matters of disabled persons - there is a group of disabled people in Mubende Rehabilitation Centre, I call them patriots, who got disabled in the service of this country because they were at the war front. As I talk now, that rehabilitation centre of Mubende has now been turned into a dumping ground. It is almost like people who go there are condemned to death; when they got problems from the field they were just dumped there.

If you go to Mubende, you will find there disabled persons; the blind whose eyes were hit by bomb shells are there and they are suffering, there is no rehabilitation programme for them. You will find people who are actually deaf because of the bombs which have been blasting in the field and so forth; they are really in a very deplorable situation. So, I am saying that if the ministry is very serious about addressing the problem of people with disabilities, then they should first of all move to Mubende Rehabilitation centre, to these patriots who are suffering, and address it. I thank you so much, Mr Speaker.

5.39

MR SIMON OYET (FDC, Nwoya County, Amuru): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Allow me to thank the committee for presenting a very comprehensive report. I am very happy that today we are discussing the fate of persons with disabilities more especially those with ear impairments.

Sometime back, hon. Madada, hon. William Nokrach and I attended a conference in Munyonyo and we had a five-minute lecture by one of the commissioners, who narrated how people with disabilities are negatively treated in this country. The commissioner told us that one day, a person with disabilities was travelling to Jinja from Kampala on a wheelchair and when he reached his destination, the conductor demanded a payment for the wheelchair and that for the person, claiming that the wheelchair was part of the disabled person. To me, that was very unfair treatment to a person with disabilities, and that actually brings us to the question of attitude.

The attitude problem is not only in Kampala; it is everywhere. In Acholi sub-region where I come from, we actually registered the largest number of persons with disabilities and they are being discriminated against in almost all sectors; at the decision-making level, on any kind of function, and even on funerals they eat last because they are considered useless people.

So, I think that the best thing we have to do as Parliament is to get out and sensitise people to change their attitude towards people with disabilities, and then to de-campaign the stigmatisation that is going round to label people with disabilities useless, or as people who do not have any substance to society.

I want to thank the committee for their observation No. 1 on page 4, that according to people with disabilities, the issue of

having access to health services by deaf people throughout the country is hampered by communication barriers.

Mr Speaker and honourable members, I want to appeal to the Ministry of Education and Sports, to come up with a supplementary budget so that we pay special attention to training more sign language interpreters, and to come out with a developed policy to recruit sign language interpreters in all institutions of service.

In Anako Hospital where I come from, we do not have anybody that can help any person with hearing impairment, and yet we have more than seven people who cannot hear or even talk, yet they are entitled to these services. I have 54 primary schools in Nwoya County but none of those schools has a trained sign language interpreter. It is a pity. And not only is it in Nwoya County, I know that there are statistics countrywide.

I want to appeal to the Ministry of Education and Sports to come up with a supplementary budget to this House so that we approve it and the developed policy be designed to train more sign language, interpreters and then recruit them, if we are to effectively implement the good recommendations of this committee.

At the same time, Mr Speaker, I want to register my sympathies with the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development, more especially the minister of people with disability, for lack of funding. I interact with that ministry widely but the minister is here and he can tell you how much he has in the vote. They do not have money. So, all these beautiful ideas will actually remain on paper; they will not be implemented. I think we really need to put more focus and more attention to some of these political issues.

Finally, Mr Speaker, I want to appeal to the Minister of Education and Sports, that now that we are going home especially in the Acholi sub-regions, schools that were built before 1996 were not disability friendly. They cannot be accessed by people with disabilities and they are the very schools where people are now going back to. We really need to come out with an affirmative action programme to create access to these classroom structures so that our children, who are physically disabled, can access education. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

5.44

MS CONCY ACIRO (Independent, Woman Representative, Amuru): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I, first of all, would like to thank the committee for the report they have presented to us today. The fact is that the schools for the disabled persons are here, but when you go to the rural areas like my district in Amuru, there are no schools. Most of these schools are located in urban areas. So, with the distance from probably where the person lives up to the school, walking from their homes up to the urban areas is very hard. So, you find that a disabled person cannot walk from their home to the school and if possible, Government should increase the number of wheelchairs or other facilities to make them reach the schools.

Another thing that I would like to point out is that I have an example in Kireka trading centre. A parent cut off part of one

leg of a child because the child was disabled. So, when the case was reported to the Police, they just did not follow up on the case and the parent was just released like that.

Another thing is that when people who are disabled, especially pregnant women go to health centres to get services, you find that nurses and doctors do not pay attention to them. If possible, such kind of people should be given free treatment.

On the issue of immunisation that the minister talked about, if you want to sensitise people about the importance of immunisation in my constituency, there are those who say that they will not take their children for immunisation simply because there was one woman who took her child for immunisation and her child became paralysed and yet the child was taken for immunisation when it did not have a disability. So, up to now that has discouraged people.

I would like to inform the hon. Minister that when you go out to immunise children, make sure that the drugs are not expired otherwise many people will be discouraged when a similar incidence happens. I thank you, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Honourable members, I think we have sufficiently considered the report and I think what has been said about deaf people is true in regard to other people with disabilities. So, what we are urging the government is that it takes care of these people. And the motion was to consider and adopt the report presented by the committee on Equal Opportunities on a petition by deaf persons. I want to put the question.

(Question put and agreed to)

(Report adopted.)

THE SPEAKER: I do not know whether we can consider another business but I think this is the convenient time to adjourn.

(The House rose at 5.48 p.m. and adjourned until Thursday, 21 February 2008 at 2.00 p.m.)