Lecturers, teachers get sh150b for salary boost

By David Lumu

Following a meeting with the leadership of the Uganda National Teachers’ Union (UNATU) and other unions on Wednesday, the Government has agreed to release sh150b towards another salary enhancement for teachers and lecturers in government-schools and universities.

According to Wilson Muruli Mukasa, the minister for Public Service, out of the sh150b, the sh15bb has been earmarked for boosting the salaries of government-aided university-teaching and non-teaching staff salary.

The rest of the money, sh150b, Muruli added, will cater for the enhancement of the pay of teachers, principals, tutors and instructors from primary up to secondary school level as well as the Business Technical Vocational Education and Training (BTVET) institutions.

The Government had earlier only provided for the enhancement of the salaries of health and legal professionals.

The teachers whose salaries had earlier been increased were not catered for. They were angered and threatened to stage a sit-down strike. However, after meeting with the President, the teachers agreed to call off the strike and gave the Government up to the end of July to mobilise funds for their salary enhancement.

Flanked by David Karuhanga, the state minister for public service and Catherine Birantwate, the permanent secretary of the public service ministry, Muruli said the money for the salary enhancement will be released during the second quarter, which starts in October.

“We have secured sh150b for salary enhancement and by October, it will be released. Therefore, we call for calm,” Muruli told journalists yesterday at the Ministry of Public Service.

How will Government raise the sh150b?

Muruli said this financial year, sh107.8b was provided for salary enhancement.

“Out of the sh107.8bb, sh58.3bb was distributed to enhance the salaries of prosecutors in the office of the Directorate of Public Prosecutions (DPP) and other workers in the Ministry of Justice, the Judiciary and health sector. The money was intended to mainly correct the disparities that were brought about by the first phase of enhancement,” the minister said.

The balance of sh49.5b was allocated to the education sector, but not distributed.

“After further analysis, the Government has identified an additional sh100.5b, which, together with the sh49.5b that had already been allocated to the education sector, makes sh150b, the minister said. He added the additional sh100b has been raised through slashing the allocations for other activities of the ministries, local governments and agencies. Some of the items that will suffer budget cuts include inspection of service delivery.”

Muruli addressing journalists at the Ministry of Public Service in Kampala yesterday. Photo by Juliet Kasirye

So, everybody should be prepared to bear with the situation,” he said.

The salary enhancement for public servants is under the 2017 public service pay policy principles approved by Cabinet and phased over a five-year payment programme.

The policy aims at harmonising the salary disparities by 2023.

During the 2018/2019 financial year, sh525b was allocated for phase one enhancement of salaries of medical workers, scientists, legal professionals, prosecutors, post-primary school teachers, instructors, tutors, head teachers and their deputies, principals, local government political leaders, Police, Prisons and Uganda’s Defence Forces (UPDF) personnel and staff of public universities.

How individual teachers will benefit

Gilbert Baguma Bates, the secretary general of UNATU, although the amount that teachers and Government agreed on was sh251b, the sh150b released is a welcome “gesture” as they continue to pursue the full implementation of the “collective bargaining” agreement.

Baguma said next week, the full details on how the sh150b will be distributed will be released.

Muruli said the release brings the enhancement of all categories of public servants to about 30% of the long-term pay targets.

“The Ministry of Public Service and the Ministry of Education and Sports will work with public universities to ensure equitable allocation of the sh150b,” he said.

Muruli said in the next financial year, the Government will provide the remaining funds for salary enhancement to all the remaining sectors of public service.

“There will not be any more salary increment for public servants whose pay has already been enhanced by 35%, until all cadres have attained that percentage,” he said.

“The Government remains committed to ensuring that all civil servants’ pay is enhanced. Therefore, I would like to make an appeal to public universities to withdraw their intentions of striking over salaries. Money has been found, which is a clear manifestation of Government’s commitment towards salary increment,” the minister said.

He said they will engage local government workers to stay calm as the Government sorts them out, too.

“For now, the budget cannot be squeezed any further and we do not want to make false promises,” the minister told local government workers.