



2017/18 Budget Framework Paper report: MPs agree with CSOs on Agric, water & Health allocations



Hon. Amos Lugoloobi, Chairperson Parliament Budget Committee submitting the Parliament Budget Committee report on 31st January 2017 during Plenary

Budget Committee Chairman Amos Lugoloobi (Ntenjeru MP) today 31st January 2017 presented the Parliament's Budget Committee report on the Budget Framework Paper for FY 2017/18, drawing from alternative budget proposals provided by CSOs in critical sectors like water, Agriculture and Health.

The Budget Report agreed with the CSOs' Agriculture Sector Position Paper and recommended that Shs 16b be provided to develop research infrastructure at Rwebitaba Zonal Agricultural Research and Development Institute, ZARDI and NASARRI research centres. The Agriculture research budget according to the budget framework paper is set to decline by 37 % from the Shs 17.865 billion in FY 16/17 to Shs 57 billion in FY 2017/18.

CSOs presented their position paper to the Agriculture Committee on Monday January 23rd 2017. The CSO paper detailed proposals regarding the strengthening of the Operation Wealth Creation Programme (OWC), ensuring availability of water for

production, strengthening policy to improve standards of inputs and agricultural products if the fortunes of Agriculture are to be turned around in the FY 2017/18.

The Budget Committee agreed with CSOs to have a master plan that clearly states the respective responsibilities for the Ministry of Water and Environment and the Agriculture Ministry in regards to water for production and irrigation. While presenting to both the Agriculture Committee on 23rd January 2017 and the Natural Resources Committee on 24th January 2017, CSOs, warned that there is lack of clarity of roles between different government agencies that are spearheading the sector of water for production and irrigation, a problem that has affected delivery on water for production.

The other issues the Budget Committee also picked up from the CSOs' position paper was on the Agriculture extension services, supply of farm inputs and the National Agricultural Extension Scheme. While making his submission on the floor of Parliament today, the Committee Chair stated that, "The Committee recommends that part of the budget for seedling/seed inputs be re-allocated to strengthening the agricultural extension services who should be responsible for quality assurance of the seedlings before payment is effected,"

The CSOs had earlier warned the Committee that the agricultural sector is being pegged back by the absence of an efficient, well-linked Input Distribution System that has affected the distribution of supplies to farmers. In line with this, the Committee recommends that Government should fast-track implementation of the National Agricultural Extension Policy and Strategy, avail resources to the Local Governments to operationalise the single-spine extension system stating that an estimated budget provision of Shs 39 billion is required to provide at least two extension workers per Sub –County, indicates the report.

Regarding health sector, MPs on the Budget Committee agreed with the position paper CSOs' presented to legislators on the Health Committee on January 20th 2017, regarding the operationalization of the National Health insurance scheme, operationalization of the HIV trust fund and the retention and motivation of health workers.

To recruit, retain and motivate health workers, the Committee reiterated Parliament's earlier recommendation that the Lunch allowance for nurses, doctors and other health workers should be revised to Shs 288,000 to bring the lunch allowance to at least Shs 12,000 per day across board.

"The Budget Committee recommends that to Shs 9.61billion to cater for 43,777 medical workers should be provided in FY 2017/18 through an intra-sectoral re-allocation from Shs 13.7b currently earmarked for the Uganda National Health Insurance. The balance of Shs 5.91b should be earmarked to kick-start the activities of the scheme pending the enactment of a law," reads the report.

The Committee however disagreed with the CSOs' Position on various sectors, for example, in agriculture; the Budget Committee recommends that the Shs 10b for provision of hoes be maintained due to the fact that hoes are still a tool for production for the common man. Other issues the Committee didn't disagree with include the increment on PHC grant arguing that the current PHC Funding should level should be maintained as a basic minimum but Ministry should review the policy on PHC Development allocation.

The Public Finance Management Act, 2015 requires Parliament to approve the National Budget Framework Paper by 1st February after which MDAs will review their plans and budgets in consideration with the Parliament feedback. Parliament will then receive the Ministerial Policy Statements in March, which CSOs will once again assess to track incorporation of the recommendations from the budget committee and other CSO issues.

SOME OF THE CSO ALTERNATIVE BUDGET PROPOSALS CONSIDERED IN PARLIAMENT BUDGET COMMITTEE & SHADOW REPORT

Ministry of Health should clarify on the plans to construct a health center II at a cost of 2.6bn each – (*Shadow report of the Budget Committee on NBFP 2017/18*)

Responsible Agency should prioritize the approval of the long awaited National Irrigation Policy (Pg. 30, *Parliament Budget Committee Report on NBFP 2017/18*)

UGX20bn proposed to recapitalize UBCTV should be reallocated to first allow UBC resolve its managerial challenges (Pg. 31 *Parliament Budget Committee Report on NBFP 2017/18*)

Required funding of UGX 5bn to operationalize the National Health Insurance scheme should be provided (Pg.51 *Parliament Budget Committee Report on NBFP 2017/18*)

Operationalising the HIV Trust fund as one way of ensuring sustainability in HIV/AIDS treatment (Pg. 49 *Parliament Budget Committee Report on NBFP 2017/18*)

UGX 5bn be provided to EOC to roll out gender and Equity assessments as per the PFMA,2015 (PG. 58 *Parliament Budget Committee Report on NBFP 2017/18*)

Water sector wage bill ceilings need to be increased to allow sector recruit staff as per approved structure (Pg. 67 *Parliament Budget Committee Report on NBFP 2017/18*)