



CSBAG BUDGET NEWS BRIEF



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Advocating for a People Centered Budget that Dignifies Humanity



CSOs move to strengthen budgeting process in Uganda

Last week the Budget Directorate in Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development held a retreat to reflect on Uganda's Budget process. CSBAG was invited to share insights into strengthening the Budgeting process in Uganda. In this week's Edition we share with you our perspectives.



Julius Mukunda - CSBAG Executive Director, Godwin Kakama - Commissioner, Budget Policy and, Kenneth Mugambe- Director Budget at the Finance Ministry retreat in Entebbe last week. The CSBAG ED delivered a CSO statement on strengthening the Budgeting process. | ©CSBAG 2017

According to the statement, the Budget process also guided CSO engagement and as such CSBAG and her members organised and mobilised citizens to actively engage at the different stages of the budget cycle. CSBAG, together with its members organised budget dialogues targeting CSOs in 85 districts. A national media campaign implemented by various CSOs rallying citizens to effectively participate in the budget process as well as listen to the National Budget Speech for FY 2017/18.

Strengthening the Budgeting Process: Our Views!

The CSBAG ED mentioned to Ministry of Finance Key areas that should be considered to improve Uganda's Budget process and these included:

We propose a review of the Public Finance Management Act, 2015 to provide adequate time for preparing and reviewing of budget documents

Enhance participatory Budgeting

Ministry of Finance needs to take a leading role in enforcing the Principle of Participatory Budgeting especially at the grassroots level, where budgeting process starts. CSBAG urged the Finance Ministry to cajole, if not force, Accounting Officers to institutionalize citizens participation in the budget process. "Currently, participation of CSOs and citizens in the planning and budgeting process is at the mercy of Accounting Officers" CSBAG ED mentioned.

Review budget cycle as provided in the PFM Act 2015

Whereas section 13(5) of the PFMA requires that the Ministers for respective Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to submit their Ministerial Policy Statements (MPS) by 15th March, CSBAG has observed that MDAs continue to submit their MPSs to Parliament late

and those who manage to submit by or before the deadline, submit substandard work.

Secondly, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and National Planning Authority (NPA) are not considered in the budget cycle yet they have a legal mandate under the PFMA, 2015 to review sector budgets. Furthermore, it was a complaint from Local and National Accounting Officers that indicative planning figures from Ministry of Finance were received late especially the 2nd Budget Call Circular. We propose the Public Finance Management Act, 2015 is reviewed to provide extra room for preparing and reviewing of budget documents. Merging the review of the National Budget Framework Paper and Ministerial Policy Statements would be a good idea.

This proposal was welcomed by some sections within the Ministry of Finance who promised to consider the matter as presented by CSOs especially on the role of EOC, NPA and merging of the NBFP and MPS process.

Production and Publication of Citizen's Budget

For the citizens to own the National Budget, the need to simplify the budget information provided is fundamental. In this regard, we find provision of simplified budget information extremely wanting and the budget website (www.budget.go.ug) itself is not regularly updated and is only available to those who have access to internet. We strongly feel that it is the role of Ministry of Finance to provide budget information and explanations underpinning any fiscal or monetary measure of government. Even the 2016 PEFA assessment agrees with us.

In response Ministry of Finance, welcomed this proposal and said that whereas they have previously produced a Citizens Budget they recognize that much more still needs to be done in this area

Feedback to citizens to budget proposals

While presenting the CSO insights, the CSBAG ED Mr. Julius Mukunda mentioned that despite CSO working with Government on the budget, there is never official feedback on the CSOs budget proposals. CSOs called on Government to always provide feedback to CSOs. "It is just prudent that for purposes of constructive and structured engagement, feedback on the proposals is provided," concluded Mr. Mukunda.

CSBAG was however grateful to the Accountability Sector Secretariat for recognizing the CSO input in improving Public Finance Management in Uganda.

CSO RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE BUDGET PROCESS

Institutionalizing citizens consultation and participatory budgeting

Review of the Public Finance Management Act, 2015 with the intention of merging the National Budget Framework Paper and Ministerial Policy Statements parliamentary reviews to create more time for scrutiny and engagement

Provide IPFs to MDAs in a timely manner

Incorporate the work of the Equal Opportunities Commission and National Planning Authority in the budget process

Production of simplified budget information and communication to public on new and existing policy measures.

Institutionalize the feedback mechanism of citizens views on the budget process

OUR WORK IN PICTURES



CSBAG's Parliament Liaison Officer, Jeff Wadulo (right) and other officials discussing the impact of agricultural extension on local revenue generation at the Imperial Royale hotel last week. |@CSBAG2017



Entebbe Municipal Council Deputy Town Clerk, Dan Lutaaya (middle) shares insights about local government revenue mobilization with CSBAG staff at the Imperial Resort hotel last week. |@CSBAG2017