

CSOs build capacity of monitors in holding **Local Government leaders accountable**



Participatory Budget Club members from Kibaale, Sheema and Kibuku interact during the knowledge sharing visit in Soroti district on 16th March 2017 | @CSBAG2017

“ Through exchange visits, experience sharing and capacity building of participatory budget clubs by civil society organizations (CSOs) across the country. This has ensured that district leaders are held accountable on poor service delivery.”

“If there is substandard work done please bring it to the attention of the district authorities and responsible officers will be held accountable,” Francis Okia the sub-county chief of Mukongoro sub county in Kumi district told PBCs also known as grassroots accountability committees. Okia was speaking during the experience sharing with the

participatory budget clubs who were on field visit to Soroti and Kumi districts on March 16, 2017. He explained that once the matter is brought to attention of district leaders it is debated and action would be taken against the officers found culpable.

The field knowledge sharing for the community monitors was organized by Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group CSBAG in partnership with Teso Anticorruption Coalition (TAC) and supported by Oxfam Uganda. The participants were drawn from Kibaale, Shema and Kibuku for eastern region.

“Open your mind to learn about service delivery and interrogate the district leaders because monitoring is a constitutional mandate,” Paul Okiring the programme coordinator of TAC told participants. He emphasized that poor service delivery should not be entertained because citizens pay taxes and therefore, district authorities should adhere to accountability and transparent procedures of utilizing funds for the intended purpose and for the good of the public.

Okiring was backed by Samuel Amorikin the program officer of TAC who noted that budget processes and monitoring are fundamental in ensuring that citizens receive quality service in health, education and road network among others. “Point out shoddy work in roads, health units and schools and by doing this you are ensuring that there is value for money,” said. Amorikin underscored the importance of PBCs working together as a team, involving the beneficiaries, working closely with school and health management committees and district leaders as well as whistle blowers to ensure that quality service is given to the citizenry.

The Soroti municipal division monitoring group encouraged their counterparts not to give up on demanding for information from district leaders that is crucial for improving service delivery. “Some district officials don’t want community monitors to monitor the quality of service delivery because you will discover that money was diverted from intended purpose to serve selfish interest but you should not give up,” Alice Apolot said. She cited shoddy work during the innovation of classroom block at Soroti Demonstration Day and Boarding Primary School after UGX 23m was injected which caused monitors to put pressure on district leaders about the contractor until they got answers.

“The UGX 23m was paining us because it was tax payers’ money and we discovered that the money was diverted for a tour. This is what we mean by holding leaders accountable,” Apolot said.

On her part the chairperson of community monitors for northern Uganda, Fatuma Kiwanuka pointed out that their efforts paid off because the district authorities started displaying information on the notice board on how funds are used in the district. She also informed the PBCs that the communities are now empowered and can’t allow any project to be carried out without their involvement and they participate in monitoring and supervision once the project has been approved.

Asha Doka another community monitor in Soroti while sharing her experience encouraged her fellow participatory budget clubs to be strong willed despite the challenges.

“Monitoring needs strong hearted people and you sacrifice yourself even if they threaten you for the good of community,” Doka stated.

Opedun Ekomolait the community monitor of Mukongoro sub -county stressed that the monitor bridges a gap between the leaders and the community and play important role. “A community monitor is a grassroots ambassador and his or her role shouldn’t be underestimated,” Ekomolait said.