

CSOs, private sector tip Gov't on key investment areas for economic stimulation



NGO Forum executive director, Richard Sewakiryanga (left), Board chairperson Zuri Model farm, Dr Maggie Kigozi (middle) and Julius Kapwepwe, Director of programs at Uganda Debt Network (extreme right) during the CSO FY 2017/18 Budget Digest in Kampala today.

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Members of the Civil Society and the Private sector, have advised government on priority areas, which need adequate budgetary allocation, for improved economic development.

Speaking during the Civil Society Financial Year 2017/18 Budget Digest, organized by Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG), together with its partners, in

Kampala on Thursday, the CSOs and members of the Private sector asked government to consider investing more in infrastructure development, agriculture, health, education and local government among other key areas.

“Without infrastructure development and manufacturing, we shall never succeed. We need to ensure value addition in agriculture; this will result into a number of jobs,” Maggie Kigozi one of the Budget Digest analysts, and board chairperson Zuri Model farm limited said. According to Kigozi, investing in infrastructure development, will enable farmers get easy access to consumers of their produce as a result of improved road network.

Analyzing the priority areas for the 2017/18 budget, the experts also pointed out areas such as the tourism sector, which they said needs steady resource allocation, for improved revenue collection.

On his part, Richard Ssewakiryanga, the Executive Director NGO Forum Uganda said there is need for government to invest in areas that are production result oriented.

“We tend to celebrate the words being used by the people who read the budget, than the budget itself. Infrastructure is being developed, but how many Ugandans are being employed?, you find that most of the projects that are being worked on, all the consultants come from the European Union, if we are going to improve infrastructure, we should train our own people,” Ssewakiryanga said.

Expenditure Vs development

Discussing Uganda’s budgetary allocations, Julius Kapwepwe, the Director Programs, Uganda Debt Network, said Uganda has paid a lot of attention to policy making than implementation of programs. Kapwepwe also faulted the government for spending a lot of money on budget for expenditure as opposed to development budget which is key for economic development of the country.

“When you look at the 2017/18 budget, the overall expenditure recurrent, is Sh17 trillion and development is only Sh12trillion out of the Sh28.9 trillion budget,” Kapwepwe said. He also criticized the government for the increased debt, which is a result of external and internal borrowing.

Lenoni Okello, an analyst and budget expert said for any economy to develop, there is need to invest in its citizenry, through education and health, for a quality and healthy human resource. “People need improved education and health services, so that they are able to deliver. As a country, we should think about the quality of our population and how they can deliver for the success of the implementation of the budget,” Okello said.

2017/18 budgetary allocations

In the 2017/18 budget the works and transport sector took the biggest share of the budget. It was closely followed by the education ministry with Sh2.4trillion and the energy sector with Sh2.3trillion budget. The Health ministry came third, with Sh1.8 trillion, followed by the security sector, whose budget was set at Sh1.4 trillion. Science and Technology sector, was allocated, the least Budget of Sh66.5b, followed by the Tourism and Trade ministry at Sh98b and the Information and Technology communication ministry at Sh106b budget. About Sh9.6trillion (35%) was allocated for debt repayment.

Julius Mukunda, the CSBAG Executive Director, decried the increasing debt burden for the country, which he said needs to be limited. Mukunda also advised the government to ensure that its MDAs adhere to the National Development Plan and gender equity for proper resource allocations.

“Some sectors don’t have work plans, and certificates of gender equality as required by the Public Finance Management Act, there is need to ensure compliance,” Mukunda said in his key note address.

Mukunda also called upon the government to ensure proper planning in resource allocation for the ministry of agriculture, saying most of the money goes to NAADs whose inputs supplied to farmers are sometimes not of good quality.

Edward Ntamba, a member of the civil society, also urged the government to consider increasing resource allocation to the local government, which is charged with infrastructure development. Only 13% of the budget has been allocated to the local government in FY2017/18 Budget.