



CSOs worried of budget cuts in the FY 2017/18 30 trillion budget



CSBAG members at a press conference where they released the first CSO statement on the National Budget Framework paper FY 2017/18

CSOs under the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) have expressed concern over the proposed budget cuts in the National Budget Framework Paper for the financial year 2017/18. The CSOs singled the health sector as the worst hit by the budget cuts of UGX541.4B.

“We note with concern that social sectors, which majority of the poor and marginalized sections of our society depend on, are once again set to experience severe budget cuts in the FY 2017/18” the CSBAG Coordinator pointed this out during the CSO media briefing held at CSBAG offices on 20th January 2017 where CSOs from national and regional levels were present.

According to the CSO statement, the Education budget is set to reduce by UGX77.5bn, the Social Development budget will reduce by UGX 20.1bn. Only agriculture and water are projected to get budget increments of UGX23.3b and UGX9.5b respectively,” mentioned the CSBAG Coordinator. Isabella Akiteng Advocacy Officer for Uganda Youth Network expressed concern that since

the budget cuts for financial year 2017/18 are set to be drastic, Youth Livelihood Program and sexual reproductive health services for the youth are likely to be affected. Micheal Muhumuza an official from German Foundation for World Population (DSW) added his voice, stating that the health sector plays big role in enabling citizens to pay taxes, so Government should rethink and instead increase on the sector budget.

CSOs noted that whereas the Budget Framework Paper 2017/18 provides for a budget of UGX 30,231.54bn from the UGX 25,688.7bn in 2016/17, Budget Support for this period is projected to greatly reduce to UGX 33.75bn from. This will see Government reliance on domestic financing rise to a tune of UGX 1,477.2bn as compared to UGX 345.6bn in the FY 2016/17. They also singled out the fact that Government failure to pay debt back is projected to cost Ugandans UGX 2,739.4bn which is 12.2% of the proposed budget for 2017/18.

In respect to gender and equity, CSOs expressed concern over the declining performance of sectors in planning for gender and equity in the FY 2017/18. “For example, the Equal Opportunities Commission report on the BFP 2017/18 CGE assessment reveals that the Accountability sector where the Ministry of Finance lies had a declined performance of 32% compared to 66% of the previous year. According to the PFMA, 2015 the budget of the accountability sector should not be assessed by Parliament since it’s scored below average. They called on Parliament to adhere to the PFMA, 2015 by rejecting plans and budgets for all sectors that scored below the EOC Certificate of gender and equity pass mark.

The CSOs listed priority areas that the 30 trillion national budget for the next financial year of FY2017/18 should focus on. In her remarks Agnes Kirabo the Executive Director of Food Rights Alliance appealed to Government to introduce rapid response mechanisms to disasters such as hunger which has affected most of the districts in the country. “We need to see Government coming hard on rapid response like it did in Kasese,” Kirabo said. To supplement on this, Flavia Akiru from NGO Forum demanded for the affirmative action on valley dams as the Karamojongs/pastoralists have invaded Acholi, Lango and Teso sub regions in search of water.

On her part Juliet Akello from UDN noted that 81% of loans are badly managed and wondered why creditors continue lending to government. She called on citizens to monitor the loan projects and hold government accountable. We are concerned that with this poor performance the debt stock has continued to rise.

Marilyn Kabalere from PELUM stressed the need for value for money in areas of extension services in the agriculture sector and advised government to address gaps in unfunded priority areas such as bad flu.

Patrick Tumwine the Advocacy Officer of HURINET questioned Governments priority areas as far as budget is concerned. He singled out the budget for Parliament and State House as being huge as there is no need to have over 429MPs in Parliament.