

Gov't pinned on wasteful expenditure ahead of CSO Pre-Budget Dialogue



Ahmed Hadji of AYDL, Julius Mukunda CSBAG Coordinator and Fiona Okiriza of ISER at the CSO press on the FY 2016/16 Budget on the eve of the CSO Pre-Budget dialogue slated for 18th March 2016 at UMA Conference Hall. ©CSBAG 2016

Civil society actors are calling on Government to expedite implementation of delayed projects valued at Ush.87.5bn by the Auditor General Report of FY 2014/15. According to CSOs some of these projects had exceeded their completion dates while others have been abandoned by various Government sectors.

In a press briefing held at the CSBAG offices today 17th March 2016, the Coordinator of the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) expressed disappointment over Government's laxity in implementing crucial projects yet in the same vain Government lists funding gaps like the health sector which requires Ushs 36bn in the next financial year to recruit of over 3000 health workers.

"Such in adequacies cost the nation and prevent citizens from accessing the much needed services that are due to them in the right quantity and at the right time" Mr. Mukunda said. "We urge Government to adhere to contractual obligations to minimize wastage of public resources due to inefficiencies within its institutions," he said.

The civil society at this press briefing commended the National Planning Authority (NPA) for adhering to the Public Finance Management Act requirement of producing a Certificate of Compliance of government MDAs to the National Development Plan II in the next financial year. "We thank National Planning Authority for this development and request the Equal Opportunities Commission and Ministry of Finance to follow suit and issue the Certificate of Gender and Equity". CSOs noted

According to the NPA, the National Budget for the next financial year has been rated 75.4% and sectors like Works and Transport (72.4%) and ICT (68.6%) whose compliance to the NPA is above 50% were commended while poor compliance performers like Accountability (41.3%) and Education (49.4%) scored below 50% .

The civil society group also cautioned Government on the Ushs 26.1bn termed as wasteful expenditure that was uncovered by the Auditor General Report of the financial year 2014/15. According to the AG, this was attributed to delayed settlements of obligations like contracts for construction services, Court awards, parking fees for grounded vehicles, breach of contracts, litigation costs, all which are avoidable.

Part of this would have been saved to fund the existing funding gaps like the Ushs 5bn required to start-up the health insurance scheme in the coming financial year. Mukunda noted.

CSOs noted that the public debt burden is worrying if Government doesn't take significant steps to address it. It was pointed out that over the past five years Government has spent sh4, 009bn on financing both domestic and external debt. He said at this rate the country risks becoming a highly indebted poor country (HIPC).

The civil society organizations however, lauded Government over creation of women entrepreneurship programme amounting to sh53b and progress made so far towards developing Minimum Wages Bill 2015 that seeks to provide for the determination of a minimum wage based on the different sectors of the economy. They also thanked Government for heeding to the Teacher and CSO cry by allocating sh211 for salary increment.

"This will undoubtedly boost teacher motivation and reduce disruption to school terms due to teachers' strikes," Mukunda stated. The CSOs implored Government to ensure that the both national and local government budgets meet the aspirations of citizens.

CSOs who held this press briefing on the eve of its highly anticipated CSO Pre-Budget Dialogue for the coming financial year also launched a campaign where it's urging government to cut on wasteful expenditures to secure enough funding for critical funding priority in the health sector of recruiting health workers.

Ms. Fiona Okiriza from the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER) while reading the statement emphasized the need to have health workers recruited to improve citizen's access to the required health services.