

Civil Society Organisations launch road map for FY 2018/19 Budget advocacy



L-R: Ag. Director, Budget at the Ministry of Finance, Ishmael Magona, CSBAG Budget Policy Specialist, David Walakira and CSBAG Executive Director, Julius Mukunda following the launch of the FY 2018/19 CSO Budget advocacy road map.

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Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have today launched a budget advocacy road map for the financial year 2018/2019.

The eleven months advocacy road map which starts next month August, until June 2018 is anchored on ensuring that the 2018/19 budgeting process is conducted in a transparent, fair and inclusive manner.

Speaking during the launch of the road map, Julius Mukunda, the Executive Director of the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) noted that during the implementation of the roadmap, they will engage government, among other stakeholders for a transparent and inclusive budgeting process.

“The process should be transparent and inclusive so that all of us are part of the 2018/19 budgeting process, in order to capture what we feel is important,” Mukunda said during the launch of the road map at Africana Hotel in Kampala. He noted that the roadmap will help the CSOs come up with a stand on what should be addressed by the government during its 2018/19 Budget formulation. Mukunda highlighted Agriculture as one of the key areas which he said should be given priority by the government in the FY 2018/19 budgeting process.

“The Agriculture sector is not growing and its productivity is very low, it is important that we put this in mind as we engage government on these very important aspects. We believe that all these can be sorted out if the process is transparent and inclusive,” Mukunda added.

CSBAG has in the past engaged the government on the budgeting process with most of its recommendations being adopted in the National Budget. According to Mukunda, 50 percent of CSBAG’s FY 2017/18 budget recommendations were adopted by the government.

As part of the FY2018/19 budget advocacy road map, CSBAG is set to hold regional consultative meetings starting August 1st, to mobilize CSOs to participate in the National budget conference and also present CSO position papers during the Local government Budget frame paper workshops. CSBAG, will also conduct quarterly budget CSO monitoring and compile regional budget releases through regional budget coalitions and also develop regional budget guides.

Starting January 2018, CSBAG is set hold thematic working group meetings, organize retreat to review the sector budget frame work papers, and mobilize CSOs for parliamentary engagements on the budgeting process.

CSBAG also plans to hold inter-ministerial budget consultations and review tax Bills and certificates for gender equity.

During the road map, CSBAG will engage key stakeholders like the parliamentary committees on Budget and the committee on Finance among others. It also plans to interact with citizens at the local level during regional budget listening events.

Gov’t acknowledges CSO efforts

Representing the deputy secretary to the treasury, Ismail Magona, the Acting director Budget at the Ministry of Finance told the CSOs that the ministry was committed and willing to support their cause in developing a Budget that is responsive to problems affecting Ugandans.

“Government takes the recommendations of CSOs seriously during the preparation and implementation of the National Budget,” Magona said.

He noted that government attaches great importance on Budget transparency, adding that a toll-free line number (0800999299) has been established to help in ensuring budget transparency. With the toll-free number, inquiries about the budget can be made by citizens.

According to Magona, CSBAG’s involvement in the Budgeting process adds confidence to the government’s goal of ensuring that all people at the grass root participate in the Budgeting process. He noted that reforms like the enactment of the Public Finance Management Act, which calls for the alignment of the Budget to the National Development Plan, is one of the many reforms government has established to improve the budgeting process.

“Effectiveness of these reforms requires monitoring in order to achieve the intended goals and this is where CSOs’ interventions are much needed,” Magona said.

During the interaction with CSOs, Magona noted that the government had decentralized the payroll system to eliminate ghost workers from the government payroll. He however indicated the need by the government to ensure harmonization of salaries for civil servants, to do away with salary disparities among public servants.

On their part, CSBAG members called on the government to ensure adequate funding towards sectors like agriculture, education and health which they said directly impact development and the quality of life for the most Ugandans. In response, Magona noted that the government had in the current budget 2017/18, allocated what is believed to be reasonable funding towards sectors like the agriculture to address issues like extension services and irrigation. He however noted that there is still need to address funding to such sectors for improved economic growth and better living standards.