

Civil Society ask MPs curb inefficiencies affecting service delivery



Manafa woman MP Rose Mutonyi speaks during the meeting with Civil Society Organisations at Hotel Africana. |@CSBAG2017

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The Civil Society Organizations under their umbrella body Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) have urged MPs to address the bottlenecks affecting service delivery in the country.

In her opening remarks, Annet Namazzi, the finance manager of CSBAG hinted that the lawmakers should spearhead the demand for improved service delivery across the country as they represent the voices of the people.

Namazzi who was representing the executive director of CSBAG Julius Mukunda urged the MPs to amplify the voice of the voiceless in demanding for effective and efficient service delivery.

“As MPs you should be combatting inefficiencies in all sectors and ensure that there is effective service delivery,” Namazzi told the legislators of the Greater North Parliamentary Forum.

The finance manager was speaking during the orientation meeting with the Greater North Parliamentary Forum at Hotel Africana in Kampala on Wednesday April 19, 2017. The Greater North Parliamentary Forum is composed of MPs from the 55 districts which were affected by the insurgency. The Civil Society was presenting its position paper on Local Government Financing and Accountability as well as Citizens Concerns for FY2017/2018.

Presenting the key highlights of CSOs concerns regarding Local Government Financing John Mark Agong, the CSBAG Budget Policy Specialist informed the lawmakers about the critical areas they should pay attention to. These included limited revenue mobilization at the district level, limited staffing, ineffective legal provisions, creation of new districts and unfavourable political pronouncements, drug stockouts and others.

To these concerns they proposed a raft of recommendations among them putting a halt to creation of new districts, review of Local Government legal framework, drug supplies should be on order form and taxing the informal sector such as sand and gold miners and furniture and brick makers to raise revenue among others.

Regarding the Tax Bills for FY 2017/2018 the civil society opposed the tax exemption for professional bodies saying leaving the latter go tax free may lead to abuse by some of these bodies with emphasis need for well regulation.

“Government should demonstrate how the exemption is going to translate into the intended benefit to Ugandans and end users of the electricity,” Nelly Busingye an official from SEATINI told MPs about Income Tax Amendment Bill on the income of Bujagali Hydro power project.

MPs respond to civil society concerns

In response to Civil Society concerns Kumi County MP Charles Ilukor emphasized that Health Centres should be encouraged to plan for the drugs they need and not pushed to them by the National Medical Stores (NMS).

He lauded the CSOs for their proposals on Income Tax Amendment Bill saying tax exemptions on professional bodies is not healthy move as it will deny the country the much needed revenue.

Manafa Woman MP Rose Mutonyi agreed with the Civil Society position paper about putting on halt the creation of new districts saying the administrative costs are not sustainable.

“There is need to stop the creation of new districts and channel the available resources to improve service delivery,” Mutonyi stated. She urged civil society to sensitize the public on the importance of paying taxes to improve service delivery.

Regarding widening the revenue base for Local Governments, Tarego East MP Obiga Kania observed that many Local Governments do not plan how to expand the revenue base but only think of collecting which according to the lawmaker will not enable district authorities to collect adequate revenue.

As a way forward the MPs agreed that there is need to strengthen the capacity of local government to generate more tax revenue and increase staffing levels if social service delivery is to improve.

Lyander Komaketch, the chairman of Greater North Parliamentary Forum assured civil society that their concerns would be taken into account. Komaketch who is an MP for Gulu Municipality observed that the CSOs had raised fundamental issues which governments both at local and national levels should address. He pledged to work together with civil society and called for introduction of cooperative banks.

In her closing remarks the state minister of Local Government Jenipher Namuyangu assured Civil Society regarding failure to absorb funds that Government will not borrow any money unless designs and feasibility studies are done especially for infrastructure development projects.