

Parliament approves 2017/18 Budget Framework Paper Report



Parliament yesterday, approved the National Budget Framework paper with amendments.

Parliament yesterday 1st February passed the Budget Committee report on the 2017/18 Budget Framework Paper and resolved that the Government must table an amended version of the Budget Framework Paper capturing the recommendations that were made in the report.

Key among the recommendations that Parliament resolved must be included in the final 2017/18 Budget Framework Paper are recommendations in critical sectors like water, Agriculture and Health, with some proposals drawn from alternative budget proposals provided by CSOs. On water for production and irrigation, Shadow Environment Minister Florence Namayanja (MP Bukoto County East) argued that Government should re-align the roles played by the Water and Agriculture Ministries to ensure that there is clarity between the two Ministries' roles.

"The funds for irrigation are scattered between ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Water. The Committee has recommended that a competent body be established to pool resources to use the funds. Water resources should be under the Ministry of Water to ensure that they are well cater for. The Agriculture Ministry can then use that water for purposes of irrigation," Ms. Namayanja said.

This particular adopted recommendation is in line with the position paper tabled by CSOs to Natural Resources Committee on 24th January 2017 where a warning was sounded that there is lack of clarity of roles between different government agencies that are spearheading the sector of water for production and irrigation, a problem that has affected delivery on water for irrigation.

Kasambya County MP Mbwaterkamwa Gaffa argued that the fortunes of the Agriculture sector cannot be improved with rudimentary methods of irrigation as was demonstrated by President Museveni where he used a jerry can.

Regarding health, Oyam Woman MP Santa Alum argued that more health funding has to be channelled to local governments to improve the quality of services offered by health centres. "In my district, there are Health Centres which have no functioning water. Worse still recently, I had to pick my own money to help pregnant women who were delivering. More money has to go to health centres," Ms Oyam said.

Speaker Rebecca Kadaga ruled that the Government should definitively explain the cost of building Health Centres. This after the Shadow Report by Hon. Kivumbi pointed out the questionable cost indicated in the Ministry of Health Sector to construct a Health Center II at a cost of 2.6billion each.

This is in line with CSOs proposals presented to the Health Committee on January 20th with the paper recommending that the Ministry of health should consider taking back proposed 10bn to local governments for retooling and basic infrastructure like latrines, repairs and for completion of incomplete works and infrastructure.

Arguing for more funding to the Health Sector, Buhweju County MP Francis Mwijukye warned that unless more funding is allocated to the Health Sector, Ugandans will continue dying way below life expectancy, effectively damp.

On the retention of health workers, MP Mbwaterkamwa argued that the living standards of health workers have to be improved if they are to be retained.

Section 9(8) of the Public Finance Management Act, 2015 requires that Parliament shall approve the national budget framework paper by 1st February.