

## Poor infrastructure, weak accountability hurting Local gov't service delivery – CSOs



Masaka District Chairperson, Jude Mbabali (left) presents his views as other officials listen today during the Local Government Budget Consultative meetings at Hotel Brovad, Masaka. On the right is Henry Kityo presenting the CSBAG position paper. |@CSBAG2017

**“There is bureaucracy in procurement of equipment and materials in Public Service. Why should I go through tenders to procure pens for the district...”**

As consultations on the FY2018/19 national budget take shape, the civil society movement, has asked the Government to address issues of poor educational infrastructure, shoddy work and health facilities for improved service delivery in the country.

According to the CSOs, under their group the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG), if addressed, efficient and effective service delivery will enable the Government attain the much-anticipated middle-income status.

Delivering CSBAG's position paper on CSO assessment of the FY2016/17, and proposals for the FY2018/19, to improve service delivery, during the Local Government Consultative workshop for the FY2018/19 at Brovad Hotel in Masaka on Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> September, Henry Kityo, a member of CSBAG highlighted a number of improvements and challenges in the Budget process, which he said need to be addressed in the subsequent financial year. “Despite these notable achievements, critical challenges prevail in bringing services closer to the people,” Kityo said.

In their position paper, CSBAG highlighted inadequate and poor infrastructure, inadequate staffing at numerous service delivery points, shoddy work and weak accountability structures as some of the major challenges to effective service delivery. The CSOs noted that despite government's efforts to increase citizen participation in the budgeting process, public participation especially at the district level remains limited. “The open budget survey 2015 ranks Government efforts to facilitate public participation in the budget process at 23% due to limited provision of comprehensive budget information,” Kityo said.

However, the CSOs, pointed out adherence to accountability requirements and functional processes and systems, improvement in timelines of release of funds, sustainable government collaborations with civil society and budget formulation and reporting as some of the notable milestones by the government in public finance management.

### **FY2018/19 recommendations**

As a way forward, the CSOs proposed that the government through the Ministry of Finance ensures that it releases the appropriated developments funds, meant for local governments, to enhance educational infrastructure.

The CSOs also demanded that the districts and the central government including the Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA) should respond to emergencies as quickly as possible to enable efficient and effective service delivery by various service providers. “District local government, should adequately budget for operation and maintenance of infrastructure in all sectors of health, water, roads and education,” Kityo said.

On health, the CSOs, implored local governments to strengthen the health inspection and support supervision mandate to vigilantly track absenteeism and late coming of health workers.

Due to the increased number of refugees flocking the country, CSOs also demanded that the government increases the budget for refugee host districts which they said are constrained by resources due to the increase in the population. It should be noted that Uganda, currently plays host to 1.2 million refugees from neighboring countries like South Sudan, Somalia, Burundi, and DRC among other countries that are facing instabilities.

### **Budget compliance**

At the two-day consultative meeting, which has been attended by District chairpersons, Resident District Commissioners, (RDCs), Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs), Town clerks and Technical officers among other district leaders called for stringent sanctions against districts who don't comply with budget plans. “What happens to districts that don't get certificates of compliance so that they don't do the same things,” Fred Bamwine, the Butambala district RDC asked.

In his presentation on interlinking annual national budgets to the National Development Plan (NDP), David Katungi from the National Planning Authority (NPA), told district leaders that a number of districts had failed to comply with the NDP, during submission of their budget plans to NPA for review. He however indicated that there is need for Parliament to establish stringent sanctions to punish district leaders who don't adhere to the requirement.

### **Unspent balances**

During the consultative meeting, Robert Ssekate, from the Ministry of Finance told the local leaders that Sh13.9b unspent balances had been transferred back to the Treasury following the end of the FY2016/17. The leaders however expressed reservations about unspent balances being returned to the Treasury, saying as a result of bureaucracies involved in procurement of equipment and services, districts fail to utilize the funds.

“There is bureaucracy in procurement of equipment and materials in Public Service. Why should I have to go through tenders to procure pens for the district. It is a long process,” Dickson Kabuye, the RDC Kiboga district said.