

CSOs Back Uganda's Public Finance Management (PFM) Reform Strategy



From Left to Right: Moderated by Jim Mugunga, Director of the Public Private Partnerships Unit, the panel discussion brought together diverse perspectives from across Uganda's policy landscape. Julius Mukunda, ED of Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG), Professor Ibrahim Mike Okumu, Dean at the School of Economics at Makerere University, Ms. Sharifah Buzeki, ED of Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA), Ms. Stella Nyapendi Chombo, a member of the Tax Appeals Tribunal and Ms. Veronica Namwanje, Executive Secretary of the Uganda Small Scale Industries Association (USSIA). Source (MoFPED)

The Permanent Secretary said the strategic direction of the strategy is intended to give Uganda the catalytic leap forward in attaining the goals of the Tenfold Growth Strategy. "The strategy explores ways to strengthen the contribution of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to Domestic Revenue Mobilization (DRM), recognizing that investments are a vital pillar of economic growth," Ggoobi said

The Government has officially launched a new Public Financial Management Reform Strategy (PFM) for the period July 2025 to June 2030. This marks a renewed drive to improve public sector efficiency, foster transparency, and ensure that public funds work

for all citizens. It also supports broader efforts to implement Uganda's National Development Plans (NDPIII and IV) more effectively across Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs).

The launch, presided over by the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED), brought together a wide range of stakeholders, including development partners, civil society organizations (CSOs), public servants, the private sector, and academia. The event was guided by the theme "*PFM for Growth and Improved Service Delivery*," and discussions focused on how the new strategy will strengthen service delivery, boost public accountability, and integrate climate resilience into Uganda's financial planning systems.

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Julius Mukunda emphasized the gains made through sustained civil society engagement, pointing out that CSOs have moved from being mere advocates to co-creators in national policy processes. He shared how CSOs, including CSBAG, have actively contributed through structures such as the Public Expenditure Management Committee (PEMCOM), Technical Working Groups, and Budget Transparency Initiatives. According to Mukunda, these contributions have resulted in meaningful changes to the way public finance is managed.

"Our job is to ensure that the government delivers the necessary services to its citizens. The noise we make has made people interested in the national and sub-county budgets, and which shows all of us that engagement can give you results," Mukunda said.

He went on to highlight CSBAG's pivotal role in calling for a national payroll audit following findings from the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) that over UGX 19 billion had been lost through irregular salary payments to ineligible individuals across 129 local governments.

"Many times, we see how monitoring Public Finance Management processes rectifies systems. People are now interested in these processes. As we embark on this new journey, let's celebrate the achievements and identify alternatives to address the failures," he added.

Mukunda, however, did not shy away from addressing persistent challenges. He pointed out that although public access to budget information has improved, many local leaders still lack the capacity to interpret or explain it clearly to their communities. He acknowledged that Uganda's budget transparency tools have expanded, but emphasized the need to strengthen citizen education and grassroots engagement.

"This new PFM Reform Strategy offers opportunity, but it will only work if all stakeholders continue to walk the journey together and ensure public resources reach the people they are meant to serve."

Other panelists such as Professor Okumu stressed the importance of building institutional capacity for monitoring and evaluation, even within academic institutions. He also called for increased investment in research to measure the real-world impact of fiscal reforms. Ms. Sharifah Buzeki noted that many policy initiatives fail at the point of implementation due to poor coordination when it comes to service delivery. She encouraged closer collaboration between technical teams and communities.

Ms. Stella Nyapendi Chombo addressed the legal side of public finance management, particularly in the Tax Tribunal. She observed that with more attention to tax education and compliance, the PFM reforms could help simplify public awareness on Uganda's tax system. From a private sector perspective, Ms. Veronica Namwanje voiced concerns about the cost of tax compliance for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), particularly with regard to Excise Duty and Income Tax. She called for tax reforms that would reduce barriers to entry for SMEs and promote formalization of small businesses, enabling them to benefit from national programs.

The PSST Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development reaffirmed the government's commitment to work together with civil society organizations, development partners, and other stakeholders throughout the implementation of the strategy. With systems such as the Integrated Financial Management System (IFMS), Human Capital Management (HCM) platform already operational, there is hope that digitized financial management will also reduce inefficiencies and improve service delivery outcomes.

The PFM Reform Strategy 2025–2030 signals a critical opportunity for Uganda to deepen accountability, promote fiscal justice, and ensure public finance management becomes more inclusive and citizen-focused. With civil society at the table, the strategy holds great promise, but its success will depend on continued collaboration, mutual trust, and the political will to translate bold plans into action.