

## CSOs Urged to Embrace AI and Younger Generation to Improve Budget Advocacy.



Kiggundu Sulaiman, Director of the Parliamentary Budget Office, delivering key insights on budget scrutiny and parliamentary oversight during the Cross-Learning Session on Best Practices for Budget Accountability Champions held at Parliament on 4 September 2025. Source (CSBAG)

**“Incorporating artificial intelligence and harnessing the dynamism of Generation Z can revolutionize budgeting processes by enhancing data analysis, citizen engagement, and transparency.” Rugo emphasized at the Cross Learning Session.**

Civil Society leaders have been encouraged to incorporate Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the younger generation in a bid to improve budget and civic advocacy in the region. This was emphasized during the Cross-Learning Session on Best Practices for Budget Accountability Champions that took place at the Parliament of Uganda and Eureka Hotel on September 4, 2025.

The session started with Kiggundu Sulaiman, the Director of Uganda’s Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO), who delivered a comprehensive presentation on Uganda’s National Budget Processes, emphasizing the

constitutional and legal frameworks that cater to the transparent and inclusive public financial management. He highlighted the critical role Parliament plays in scrutinizing budget proposals, authorizing expenditures, and monitoring government performance to ensure alignment with national development goals.

The budget process follows a meticulous timeline mandated by the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) 2015, which requires submission of the National Budget Framework Paper by December 31 and parliamentary approval by May 31, enabling effective oversight by parliamentary committees.

“As the Parliamentary Budget Office, we play an advisory role and give recommendations to the House and Members of Parliament who work in sectoral committees,” Sulaiman said

Uganda’s National Budget for the fiscal year 2025/26 embodies this approach under the theme “Full Monetization of Uganda’s Economy through Commercial Agriculture, Industrialization, Expanding and Broadening Services, Digital Transformation and Market Access.” The resource envelope is projected at approximately **UGX 71.9 trillion**, financed primarily through domestic revenues (**51%**), alongside external financing (**17%**) and domestic refinancing (**14%**). Some of the Key allocations prioritize development plan implementation (**42%**), human capital development (**16%**), governance and security (**14%**), integrated transport infrastructure (10%), and private sector development (**4%**).

Despite strategic investments, challenges persist in project execution due to limited readiness, procurement delays, and capacity constraints at local government levels, often resulting in unspent funds being swept to the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. John Segujja of Community Development and Child Welfare Initiatives (CODI) in Luweero directed a question to the Director of the Parliamentary Budget Office, seeking clarity on why the Government of Uganda holds unutilized loans despite cash being earmarked for specific projects. In response, Mr. Kiggundu Sulaiman explained that Uganda operates on a cash budget system that functions in cycles. When funds for a given project arrive but the financial cycle has ended, the money is swept into the Consolidated Fund rather than being immediately utilized for the intended purpose. He further highlighted that Uganda finances 51% of its budget domestically while sourcing the remainder externally, underscoring the balancing act in managing fiscal resources.

Florence Tumuheirwe, the Executive Director of Kigezi Women In Development (KWID), also raised concerns about repeated delays in government project implementation despite the availability of funds, adding that despite borrowing more loans and disbursing grants, projects lag behind. She reiterated observations of “over-governance” previously noted by the Director, pointing to an excess of administrative structures lacking clear impact or accountability. Mr. Kiggundu Sulaiman acknowledged capacity challenges as a key driver of implementation delays, revealing that Uganda currently holds **UGX 16 trillion** in borrowed funds that remain unabsorbed due to factors such as understaffing and the hiring of personnel lacking the skills to execute project duties effectively within government institutions.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) continue to play an indispensable role in this ecosystem. Mr. Silindile Shezi, Program Manager at Centre for Economic Governance and Accountability in Africa (CEGAA), shared the impactful Budget Monitoring, Evaluation, and Tracking (BMET) approach for CSOs, noting, “BMET empowers civil society to systematically track budget allocations and expenditures, transforming advocacy from reactive protests into structured, evidence-based engagement that influences policy and promotes accountability.” This approach fortifies the bridge between CSOs and government, fostering sustainable, participatory budget accountability

Abraham Rugo of the Bajeti Hub emphasized the advancing role of technology and youth participation in budgeting, stating, “Incorporating artificial intelligence and harnessing the dynamism of Generation Z can revolutionize budgeting processes by enhancing data analysis, citizen engagement, and transparency.” This aligns with Kenya’s evolving Public Finance Management system, which increasingly integrates digital platforms and AI to democratize fiscal governance.

Kenya’s internet penetration is higher, and many in the younger generation are interested in understanding the country’s financial management practices. “It is high time we think of the younger generation and how to interest them in taxes and advocacy work which also affects them in many ways,” Rugo added during his session. In conclusion, the Cross-Learning Session on Best Practices for Budget Accountability Champions highlighted the vital role of Artificial Intelligence and youth engagement in improving budget advocacy across the region. Civil society continues to strengthen accountability through approaches such as Budget Monitoring, Evaluation, and Tracking (BMET), while harnessing AI and Generation Z to enhance engagement and transparency.