

Finance ministry directs local government officials to issue quarterly releases



CSBAG Executive Director, Julius Mukunda (first on the right) presents the CSO position during the Finance Ministry quarterly release press conference for quarter four expenditure releases for the FY2017/18 today, 12th April, 2018. Looking on are Finance ministry officials and CSO representatives.

“We are going to take on that beginning next financial year, Local Governments to issue quarterly releases to the public at the districts...”

The efforts of civil society have finally paid off prompting the ministry of finance to direct Local Government accounting officers to call for quarterly releases at the district level to ensure accountability and value for money.

“They have no reason as to why they don’t present quarterly releases as the ministry of finance releases funds to the district promptly,” Kenneth Mugambe the director of Budget said.

Mugambe was responding to a question from Robert Kakuru a member of Civil Society Organizations at Local Government level in Kigezi region who told the finance officials that accounting officers at the districts should also start issuing quarterly releases to the public.

Kakuru an official from Kick Out Corruption in Kigezi argued that by the accounting officers issuing quarterly releases it will ensure accountability and value for money.

“We are going to take on that beginning next financial year, Local Governments to issue quarterly releases to the public at the districts,” Mugambe stated.

This was during the Finance Ministry Budget release press conference for quarter four expenditure releases for the Financial Year 2017/18 at the ministry of finance headquarters in Kampala on Thursday April 12, 2018.

Mugambe said that the total approved budget for financial year 2017/18 was UGX29.08 trillion and a total of UGX 3.157 billion has been released for quarter four expenditure excluding debt of Karuma and Isimba dams. On economy growth Mugambe told CSOs that according to Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) the economy grew at 6.3% from January to December 2017, compared to 3% in same period in 2016.

Commendations

Presenting the CSOs position under the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group, the executive Julius Mukunda commended the Finance ministry for naming the best and worst performing Accounting Officers. “This move which is in fulfillment of Sec 11 (2) (g) of the PFM Act, 2015 will go a long way in improving services delivery and reducing public resource wastage,” he said.

Mr Mukunda also mentioned that CSBAG is in discussions with the Accountant General to jointly undertake a Public Finance Management Index a move which we believe, will enhance Government accountability to Ugandan citizens on how it delivers on the PFMA, 2015.

He also highlighted the delayed submission of FY 2018/19 Ministerial Policy Statements by MDAs to Parliament within the stated timeline of by 15th March (Sec 13 (13)).

“In our meeting with the Parliament Committee of Education to discuss the FY2018/19 budget, we were informed that by 10th April 2018, the Committee had not yet received the consolidated MPS for the Education Sector,” he said.

On behalf of the CSOs, Mr Mukunda submitted a case of misappropriation of roads fund for Q1 and Q2 of the FY 2017/18 for the Bushenyi – Ishaka Municipal Council. “Citizens from Bushenyi are requesting for a forensic audit to bring the perpetrators to account. Appropriate action should be taken on the officers who have allegedly swindled the funds meant for roads,” Mukunda said.

Performance Monitoring

The CSOs also submitted the Annual CSO Budget Performance Monitoring Report for the FY 2016/17. The report covers 105 Health centers, 579 UPE schools and 24 pensioners from 28 districts. It has recommendations on improving pension, delays in receipt of funds among others.

The CSOs however raised concerns about the lack of feedback on the Budget Performance Monitoring Reports which is demanded by the citizens who take part in these monitoring exercises in the communities.

He also raised concerns such as lack of certificate for gender equity, failure by Ministries Departments and Agencies to present the budget proposals in time and poorly written ministerial policy statements

On his part Arthur Bainomugisha the executive director of ACODE decried the persistent absenteeism by both teachers and health workers, which hampers service delivery. He also raised concerns about pupils studying under trees as well as low staffing levels among others.

Responding to the concerns raised by Civil Society, Mugambe assured them that action will be taken against the district officials in Bushenyi according to the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA).