

Ford Foundation VP lauds CSOs on budget transparency, accountability



Martin Agrebu (left), Ford Foundation VP for East Africa having a chat with Julius Mukunda, CSBAG Executive Director during his visit to CSBAG offices today.

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The Vice president of Ford Foundation East Africa, Martin Agrebu, has hailed the civil society organizations under the umbrella of Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) for championing the cause of improved budget processes and ensuring that Government is accountable to the citizenry.

“We really appreciate the way you do things. I commend you for ensuring that Government is accountable to the people,” Agrebu said.

The visiting vice president was impressed by the collaborative and inclusiveness approach that civil society has engaged in to bring different development partners together.

The Vice President encouraged the CSOs to intensify and focus on four key areas while advocating for public finance management. These include, a collaborative approach, engagement with Government, inclusiveness and being evidence based organization which is able to take advantage of opportunities available in order to be successful. He cited the opportunity of oil and gas where Uganda is engaged in exploration.

Agrebu informed the Civil Society that their budget monitoring approach and public financial management focus is key to ensuring that budget transparency and government accountability. This was during a meeting hosted to welcome him to CSBAG headquarters in Kampala on Saturday April 14, 2018.

He told the CSOs that Ford Foundation’s main focus is based on civil engagement towards narrowing the gap of inequality. This he said is based on three pillars of operation, which include ensuring representative government, responsiveness, and budget and revenue.

He said the question of accountability can’t be underestimated and CSOs should ensure that the Government is responsive to the issues they raise in order to provide quality service delivery to the citizens. The Vice president was accompanied by the Ford Foundation regional director of East African region Moriss Makalo together with the staff from Nairobi. He also thanked CSBAG for honoring Ford Foundation because it makes their work successful.

CSO interventions

In his remarks, the executive director of CSBAG, Julius Mukunda informed the visiting Vice president and the Ford Foundation team that had accompanied him that Civil Society had made some significant strides in influencing the budget process in the country.

He said because of CSBAG’s expertise in public financial management, the ministry of finance, planning and economic development (MOFPED) has since asked CSBAG to join the Public Expenditure Management Committee.

He said CSBAG has been instrumental in pushing for policy reforms and to a large extent achievement has been made such as the introduction of treasury single account, certificate of finance equity, certificate of finance implication for national health insurance, which is issued by the ministry of finance, planning and economic development among others.

The executive director also told the Vice president and his team that the CSOs have been able to cause shifts/changes in the national budget since 2013 and some of the issues raised by civil society have been incorporated into the national budgets. Other achievements that CSOs have attained include coming up with the Uganda Transparency Initiative in tracking financial indexes, causing the publication of criteria used for tax exemption, illicit financial flows, promotion of widening the taxation base and mobilization of citizens to participate in the budget process and others.

He said citizen participation in the budget process is crucial and has produced fruits especially in Mayuge where the district headquarters and other facilities didn’t have rumps but have now been constructed.

Collaborations

John Muhairwe, who represented the director budget in the ministry of finance, planning and economic development commended Ford Foundation for supporting projects in Uganda; especially CSBAG. He informed guests that CSBAG participates in regional budget planning processes and has been instrumental in influencing reforms. He cited the display of quarterly releases in the districts whenever the central government disburses quarterly releases. He appealed to Ford Foundation to continue supporting CSBAG with aim of improving service delivery.

Representatives of CSOs from various districts across the country thanked Ford Foundation for the support saying the support has caused the formation of budget village committees, whose views are voiced at the national level and it has enabled the youth to understand the processes. “The youth are now able to interpret the budget since the concept of participatory processes was introduced by the CSOs,” Ali Kaviri a youth said



Julius Kapwepwe CSBAG Chairperson (2nd right) and Julius Mukunda, CSBAG ED (3rd right) handing a plaque to Ford Foundation officials at the CSBAG offices today.