

## Youth Budget Advocates develop road-maps to influence Local Gov't service delivery



Youth Budget Advocates from eastern Uganda after developing an advocacy roadmap today, 11<sup>th</sup> October, 2018 in Budaka district. They will use the roadmaps to demand for efficient service delivery among others.

**“Budgets and plans should speak the same language and the principles of budgeting require that you don't plan alone...”**

Youth Budget Advocates from the eastern Uganda districts of Kibuku and Budaka have developed advocacy road-maps that will be used to influence budget processes and demand for accountability at the local government level.

Speaking at the event today, CSBAG Budget Policy Specialist, Siragi Magara appreciated the youth for making time for the road-map development exercise. He encouraged the youth to be on the lookout for activities on the budget cycle and focus on raising evidence based issues while conducting their advocacy activities.

The Young Budget Advocates groups were formed with the appreciation that young people are conscious and contribute to influencing government to establish and review existing laws and policies for equitable generation, allocation and utilization of taxes. As such, young people's voices can serve to ensure that leaders are more accountable and in position to fulfil social contracts with citizens.

The Kibuku Youth Budget Advocates chairman John Sigida welcomed participants and delivered his appreciation from the youth of Kibuku to CSBAG for raising the consciousness of district youth towards budget issues. “This initiative is set to change Kibuku for the better,” he said. He added that group members have been going out to their localities to identify key advocacy issues. He challenged the youth to improve their time keeping in order to effectively accomplish the tasks ahead of them.

Prior to delivering a presentation about the Local Government budget process, the Kibuku Chief Finance Officer, John Madawa Mbula encouraged the youth to appreciate the value of work and to have visions of what they would like to be.

He emphasized the importance of a consultative and participatory budget process. “The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Local Government, Mr Ben Kumumanya recently encouraged us (district officials) to reinstate Parish development Committees to improve the consultative and participatory nature of budgeting,” Mr Madawa said.

### Budgets and Plans

Speaking about the Budget process, Mr Madawa told the youth that the Budget Act of 2001 has the budgetary procedures of how we should systematically and effectively carry out the budgeting process. “Budgets and plans should speak the same language and the principles of budgeting require that you don't plan alone. You are supposed to involve others,” he said.

He reminded the district youth that Article 190 of the constitution of Uganda empowers Districts to develop plans and integrate them with Lower Local Government plans and submit them to the National Planning Authority. He added that Section 77 of the Local Government Act. empowers districts to formulate, approve and execute budgets as long as the budgets are balanced (expenditure priorities must correspond with the revenues).

Mr Madawa directed the youth to the various stages within the budget process that would require their involvement in order to effectively advocate for better service delivery. Some of those stages include the Local Government Budget conference which involves a range of stakeholders, including the Civil Society, opinion leaders, development partners, sub counties and Heads of Departments.

He also invited the Youth Budget Advocates to get involved in monitoring the implementation of various projects within the district. “You are welcome to join us during our quarterly monitoring visits,” he said.

Earlier, following the formation of the Youth Budget Advocates group, a lot of the youth did not have budget analysis skills that would help them undertake effective budget advocacy. The skills gaps required training of the Young Budget Advocates group members to equip them with necessary budget analysis skills that would aid their advocacy activities. As such, trainings were conducted for separate YBA group members from Kibuku and Budaka districts.

However even as the youth were trained by CSBAG in communication and social media skills, one of the impediments was that very few (less than 25%) of them have smart phones while those who have are challenged by the OTT social media tax. These challenges inhibit the Young Budget Advocates' abilities to fully engage on budget advocacy issues through social media platforms.

The Young Budget Advocates initiative is being implemented under a project dubbed 'Strengthening Young People's Influence and voices in Uganda's budget processes.' It is currently being implemented by Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group in partnership with Action Aid Uganda. The project seeks to positively influence Local Government leaders as well as leaders from the central government to be more responsive towards young men, women, PwDs and other vulnerable groups' needs and improve service delivery for citizens.