

Finance ministry unveils Budget guide, releases expenditure updates

“We cannot be everywhere, so we rely on the public and the Civil society to ensure that this money is put to good use...”

The Minister of Finance, Hon. Matia Kasaija has today launched a publication titled: Know Your Budget: A citizen’s guide to the FY 2017/18 Budget.

Speaking at the Finance Ministry headquarters, Kasaija said public servants owe it their bosses (the Ugandan public) to ensure that they are informed about the work they do on their behalf. “We are here to cater for the interests of our bosses,” Kasaija said.



Left, Finance minister, Hon. Matia Kasaija launches the ‘Know Your Budget’ publication. On the right is Permanent Secretary and Secretary to the Treasury, Keith Muhakanizi. Inset above, on the right CSBAG Executive Director, Julius Mukunda delivers the Q2 2016/17 Budget monitoring report while Director Budget, Kenneth Mugambe (right) and Mr Muhakanizi (middle) look on. |@CSBAG2017

The launch of the simplified Budget guide comes on the back of numerous calls by the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), who through their umbrella body the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) have been asking the Finance ministry to come up with simplified versions of the Budget document to improve citizen understanding and involvement in Budget monitoring and implementation process.

CSBAG and its members have on various occasions called on the Finance ministry to improve access to the details entailed in the national Budget document, arguing that the national Budget document is often delivered in a complex language that is difficult for most Ugandans to understand, hence limiting their ability to effectively participate in the Budgeting process.

Following the launch of the Budget guide, Hon. Kasaija called on the public be vigilant by keeping an eye on the money that has been allocated to various entities. Referring to the monitoring limitations of the Finance ministry, Hon. Kasaija said: “We cannot be everywhere, so we rely on the public and the Civil society to ensure that this money is put to good use.”

Budget Monitoring

Delivering the Quarter Two 2016/17 Budget monitoring report at the same event, CSBAG Executive Director, Julius Mukunda noted that only 110 schools (49%) out of the 223 schools had been visited by the Inspector of Schools during the third school term. Some of the institutions like the School Management Committees that are responsible for monitoring school standards were found to be lacking as some members were unable to read or write yet they had been tasked with supervising the functionality and efficiency of the head teachers when handling school expenditure. “The quality of some of these School Management Committees is so low and this impacts the quality of the oversight,” said Mukunda.

Regarding Pension arrears monitoring, Mukunda said some pensioners in Kasese, Mityana, Sheema and Kalungu had not received their arrears irrespective of the reports provided by their districts that they had been paid. He called on the Ministry of Public service to provide guidance to the Local Governments to clean up all files of the pensioners and remove any anomalies, as these can be avenues for fraud. Mr Mukunda also said that from the monitoring exercise it was revealed that 92.8% of the schools had displayed Budget release information on their notice boards, adding that this is a positive trend that will support active participation of citizens in the budget monitoring of the utilization of funds that are released to the districts.

Expenditure releases

Presenting the Quarter two expenditure releases at the same event, the Permanent Secretary and Secretary to the Treasury, Keith Muhakanizi, said Quarter One funds had been released on 7th July whereas Quarter Two, releases were made on 21st September 2017. Muhakanizi said for Quarter One and Two FY 2017/18, the Finance Ministry has so far released Shs6,698.17billion, which is about 53.2% of the approved Government Budget excluding Debt, External Financing & Appropriation in Aid (AIA). This amount will among others cater for comprehensive provision for wages and salaries, Pensions and Gratuity.

Shs300.12billion will cater for Verified Domestic Arrears to ensure that Government institutions meet their obligations towards private companies, of which Shs 19billion was released in Quarter One for salary arrears. Shs100billion has been released in Quarter Two to cater for pension and gratuity arrears.

In view of the planting season, Muhakanizi said National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) was given Shs151.77billion and the Coffee Development Authority was given Shs35.74billion. The National Medical Stores was given Shs227.92billion to meet obligations for the purchase of drugs.

On infrastructure, Shs680.71billion was provided to UNRA for Quarter One to ensure that there is no delay in the implementation of projects. In the Energy Sector, Shs72billion was provided to meet thermal energy costs. In the water sector, Shs141.7billion was provided to meet the obligations of water projects, especially under the Kampala Water and Sanitation project. Shs22billion was provided for rehabilitation of Mulago Hospital to be completed in December 2017. Shs8.6billion has been provided to the Uganda Cancer Institute for payment of outstanding certificate for the Bunker and specialized medical supplies as well as Shs3.7billion to the Uganda Heart institute for procurement of specialized equipment.

Local government

The releases to local governments have also been made and they are based on annual workplans, quarterly workplans and annual cashflows. A total of Shs638.35 billion has been released to local governments accordingly: Wage-Shs851.99billion, Non-wage-Shs163.33billion, Development-Shs169.1billion. Muhakanizi thanked the CSOs for supporting the Finance Ministry’s transparency initiative.