

Use your large numbers to influence budget change-Youth told



Jacob Opolot(second right) and Julius Mukunda poses for a photo with one of the category winners during Youth Budget Literacy Challenge on December 13th 2019 at Makerere University CoBAMS auditorium. ©2019.

Although youth make the largest part of Uganda's population, there has been they have had little participation in national budgeting and budgeting process, Jacob Opolot the chairman Parliamentary Education and Sports Committee has said.

"Let's not celebrate numbers of youth without impact, if you are going to sit back and wait for me to make for you budget, that's not good for you. For how long will you wait for things to be done for you?" said Opolot.

He said Parliament scrutinizes and ensures that budget proposals that are brought in Parliament are important to the citizen and are in line with the provisions of national plans and ensures that money is available to fund the budget.

"You can't develop one part of the country and leave others waiting, every part must be given equal opportunities to enjoy the Government resources. I thank CSBAG for encouraging the youth to participate in budgeting process through organizing such kinds of forums," he stated. He was optimistic that the Youth Budget Literacy Challenge continues for more years so that more youth can be nurtured to participate in national budgeting and planning process.

'Government should take keen interest on involving youth in budgeting'

Opolot who is also an MP for Pallisa County said the youth should be responsible into issues that affect them.

"I am impressed about this kind of arrangement, it challenges the youth to be responsible about what touches them and instead of sitting, influence the budgeting process. I call upon Government to have similar initiatives to have issues affecting the youth shape the budgeting process. This is very good idea, I call up on CSBAG to continue with this and even take it beyond this," said Opolot.

Julius Mukunda, the Executive Director Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) said the Budget Literacy Challenge was aimed at letting youth know that budget is the most important thing that Government can use to transform societies but also to understand that budget can lead to disasters if not implemented well.

"Some of the things that are making our budget not have impact on the population is for example misuse of our resources and corruption in a way that once money is appropriated, services are not delivered they way it is supposed to be. Another issue is that even the little money we have isn't being utilised well because some sectors and MDAs are returning the money. Local Governments don't have the capacity and ministries at the headquarters are returning money to national treasury; You asked to implement the budget but at the end of the financial year, your return the money. This shows that the capacity to implement the budget isn't adequate," said Mukunda.

'Invest more in youth programmes'

Mukunda added that that Government has gone money to invest in initiative such as Youth Livelihood Programmes, Uganda Women Entrepreneurship projects but was quick to say that more money should be invested in them. He said the biggest percentage of youth do not have the collateral so can't go to bank for loans, so they need to be trained so that they can start small businesses because Government can not employ all of them.

"Government needs to start initiatives that can allow the youth to employ themselves. Even if you make bricks and you are able to sell them and make money, you are employing yourself which is very important. Government needs to invest in small and medium enterprises to create jobs. If we don't solve this problem today, we are on time bomb tomorrow because more than half the population if not well planned for can cause problems," he stated.

Judges' view

Godfrey Senono, a seasoned wrier and poet said the criteria used in poetry vetting process included using right literature and literacy knowledge to get the winners. He said Budget Advocacy is very important is very important and that youth must not be left out during budgeting and planning process.

"From my own perspective, I think the reason we have budget problems is because youth are left out in budgeting process. They quite think that budget is a thing for old people and it's high time they got concerned about the budgets," he said.

Winners

At the end, Maurice Ouma was crowned a winner of art category and walked away with sh1m prize, Shane Katureebe, poetry category winner (sh1m) and Budaka PWDs(sh1.5m) flooring the rest of the contestants.

Winner's view

Shane Katureebe, the winner in poetry category said the real inclusive budget is business as usual. He hailed CSBAG for challenging youth to bring their creative potential through Budget Literacy Challenge.