

OAG FY2023/24 REGIONAL UPDATES: CITIZENS URGED TO ENGAGE IN UGANDA'S AUDIT PROCESS FOR BETTER SERVICE DELIVERY



Representatives from CSBAG, the Office of the Auditor General, Inspectorate of Govt, CSOs, Law Enforcement, district and city leaders at the Dissemination Report FY2023/24 Findings in Arua on July 28. Source (CSBAG)

"The Universal Primary Education(UPE), capitation grants were schools inflated 1,682 learners and were not captured leading to underfunding of UGX480 million in schools in Adjumani, Arua, Pakwach and Nebbi." Principal Auditor Martin Wamboza said"

The Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG), in partnership with the Office of the Auditor General (OAG), convened a regional visit in Arua City to disseminate the FY 2023/24 audit findings for West Nile on July 28. The meeting attracted 87 duty bearers and representatives from CSOs in Arua: Friends of Zoka, CEFORD, and WECISNET. The report covered 13 districts including Adjumani,

Maracha, Madi Okollo among others. The engagement brought together local government leaders, law enforcement officers, and officials from the OAG and the Inspectorate of Government, aiming to enhance transparency and citizen involvement in audit processes as part of ongoing public financial management reforms.

The Local Council V Chairperson Alfred Okuonzi commended CSBAG for convening the meeting and amplifying local government voices for fair resource allocation. He also appreciated the OAG's collaboration with CSOs in simplifying and disseminating the audit report. However, he raised concerns about the central government's control over programs meant for local governments, citing a breach of the decentralization policy. "What is due to local government does not trickle down," he said, citing funds for mindset change and private sector growth that fail to reach the district level.

CSBAG Board Member Imelda Namagaa emphasized the value of participatory auditing in improving service delivery. She praised OAG's collaborative approach with civil society through dialogues. "These dialogues are critical in strengthening accountability on both the supply and demand sides," said Namagaa, urging all stakeholders to champion the implementation of audit recommendations for improved public service outcomes.

Principal Auditor Martin Wamboza from the OAG stressed the importance of citizen participation in audit processes to enhance credibility and improve service delivery. He pointed to key findings in the West Nile region, including the UPE capitation grants were school enrolments inflated to 1,682 learners that led to UGX 480 million in underfunding in Adjumani, Arua, Pakwach, and Nebbi. He also cited UGX 14 billion in road maintenance grants that were underutilized due to delayed releases, and failure by 68 PDM beneficiaries to account for UGX 33.37 million. He urged better planning, increased funding, and timely fund transfers from the central to local governments.

Wamboza called for collaborative efforts to promote transparency, accountability, and citizen involvement through consultations, citizen-led monitoring, and joint audits. During the plenary session, Zombo and Yumbe district representatives raised concerns over misuse of PDM funds, noting that some communities perceived the funds as government gifts. They also cited the rise of ghost SACCOs that disappeared after receiving PDM and Emyooga money, and questioned the data used in audit reporting.

Yumbe District Youth Chairperson Mahad Kassim criticized the Emyooga fund disbursement process, saying some SACCO members withdrew funds without leaving any financial records. He questioned how audits were conducted without tracking financial flows, pointing to motorcycles registered under individual names.

Participants also cited underfunding and delayed release of local government funds as causes of poor absorption and project delays. Unspent funds often reverted to the consolidated fund, limiting local service delivery.

Angupale Swadiq, Assistant RDC of Arua City, noted procurement irregularities such as price variations and improper contracting. He pledged to implement the OAG's recommendations to improve procurement practices within the city.

CSO representatives, led by William Amanzuru of Friends of Zoka, called on the OAG to extend audits to refugee-hosting communities in West Nile, where significant off-budget support is provided by development partners and NGOs. Bonny Ongom, Head of Ombudsman Affairs at the Inspectorate of Government in Arua, praised CSBAG for simplifying the audit reports and called for urgent implementation of audit recommendations. He also urged local governments to maximize use of limited resources and report unresolved issues to central government.

In conclusion, the dissemination of the FY2023/24 Audit Report in West Nile was well received, with a unified call for greater citizen awareness, improved budget transparency, and stronger accountability across the 13 districts.