



PRESS STATEMENT: UGANDA'S OPEN BUDGET SURVEY (OBS) RESULTS SHOW A DECLINE IN BUDGET TRANSPARENCY IN 2019

Date: 9th July 2020 | Venue: UDN Offices

1) INTRODUCTION

1. We the entities (CSBAG, SEATINI) are gathered here today, in solidarity with Uganda Debt Network (UDN) and partnership with International Budget Partnership (IBP) based in the United States of America who conducted an Open Budget Survey (OBS) exercise between September and December 2019 about the level of National Budget accessibility to the Ugandan citizens. OBS, therefore, is an independent Global measure of the extent of availability of National Government budgets with a focus on three major pillars of: *i) Budget Transparency ii) Public Participation; and iii) Budget oversight*;
2. Supported by the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED) in Uganda, UDN and IBP have carried out the OBS exercise 7 times, since 2006 and the exercise is done every two years to assess the changes over the stated period in respect to the three pillars stated;
3. To assess the three pillars stated above, the OBS methodology mainly focuses on consistency of the practice (rather than legal provision) of Government in making Budget information "publicly availability" - e.g. online and in a given timeframe;
4. The specific 8 key Budget information documents assessed are 1) Pre-Budget Statement 2) Executive's Budget Proposal 3) Enacted Budget 4) Citizens Budget 5) In-Year Reports 6) Mid-Year Review 7) Year-End Report; and 8) Audit Report). Again, the methodology verifies the extent to which the Data provided in these Documents is comprehensive.
5. All responses are evidence-based (e.g. citations from budget documents; the country's laws; Interviews with Gov't officials, Legislators, plus in-country Budget experts and Ministry of Finance Peer Reviewers. Any pass-mark is at least 60% on any pillar.
6. Today, UDN in partnership with IBP have released the 2019 Open Budget Survey (OBS) results or findings as follows.

2) MAJOR FINDINGS

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7. **Global position results overview:** On the Global Average Transparency from the 117 countries where the OBS was done in 2019, average score was 45 out of 100, implying “public availability” of Budget information remains limited; Even so, the Top/ good performing six countries in providing extensive information to the public for scrutiny in 2019 were: New Zealand- with 87 score; South Africa (87); Mexico (82); Brazil (81) – in re among the top six countries.
8. Compared to the above, Uganda’s overall Open Budget Survey score/ ranking was 36th out of 117 countries assessed under OBS in 2019.
9. **Africa continent and East Africa results:** While South Africa- at 87 was the best in Africa, Uganda at 58 came 2nd in Africa and best in East Africa. After Uganda was Kenya at 50, Madagascar at 40, Rwanda at 49, South Sudan at 17, Burundi at 6, Somalia at 3 and Comoros that scored 0 (zero) out of 100.
10. Under the specific three afore-mentioned pillars;
 - i) Uganda under the pillar of **Budget Transparency** score was 58 out of 100 in 2019; away from 65 in 2012, 60 score in 2017.
 - ii) Uganda under level of **Public Participation** pillar scored 22 out of 100. The implication could be that while there are spaces for citizens to participate in Budget process, the results of the consultation are not reflected in the final Budget priorities for the country.
 - iii) In terms of the pillar of **Budget Oversight** (which mainly looks at the role of Parliament and Office of the Audit General in involving citizens’ participation, the specific average score for Uganda was 59%.

3) **RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOVERNMENT**

11. UDN and IBP invite Government of Uganda to more comprehensive reporting e.g. on full disclosure on Revenues including Non-Tax Revenues and total Public Debt.
12. The In-year reports (i.e. Quarterly reports and Half- Year reports) should show performance, including debt performance with specific programs or projects, which is not the case so far. This will improve citizens access to updated information on Government’s delivery of public services versus Budget commitments.
13. Government institutions should ensure that the intended beneficiaries (Rights holders for whom the projects are being put in place) are involved in Project design, for greater community ownership and impact.
14. Parliament of Uganda should systematically allow any member of the public or any civil society organization to testify during its hearings on the Audit Report.
15. Similarly, Uganda's Office of the Auditor General should establish formal mechanisms for the public to contribute to relevant audit investigations. **FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY.**

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