



UDN News update

UDN co-hosts Pre-Budget Dialogue



UDN Board Chairperson, Prof. Ezra Suruma (centre) was the chairman of the half-day dialogue

On Tuesday, 15th April 2014, Uganda Debt Network together with other partners under the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) umbrella hosted the annual Pre-Budget Dialogue to discuss the FY 2014/15 National Budget proposals.

The dialogue, held at the UMA Conference Hall in Kampala under the theme, *"Every shilling counts: Are the FY 2014/15 Budget Proposals Efficient and Effective to deliver us from Poverty?"* drew participants from the Civil Society, the Private Sector, academia, Members of Parliament, Ministry of Finance and small-scale farmers and community monitors from different parts of the country. A total of 235 people (148 males and 87 females) attended the half-day meeting.

The CSBAG presented various CSO perspectives on the budget strategy and priorities for FY 2014/15, highlighting some major concerns like reduction in funding to the education sector and public sector management, inter alia. On the other hand, funds increments to Agriculture, Health, Water and Environment and Works and Transport sectors were applauded.

The CSBAG Statement pointed out some critical activities that are underfunded in the 2014/15 Budget, including wage enhancement for other health workers who

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are not medical officers at Health Centre IIIs and IVs (UGX 129 bn is required annually to enhance all staff salaries in the sector).

It was noted that the recruitment of health workers at Local Government level and at the Ministry of Health headquarters was crucial to deal with issues of low staffing.

CSOs also called upon Government to expedite the establishment of the Salary Review Commission to harmonise salaries and remuneration of public servants. They further recommended that for court awards with regard to human rights violations, individuals responsible should pay the awards rather than using tax payers' money.

In the wake of proposed reduced funding to the UPE programme, parents were also called upon to collaborate with Government by playing their civic roles on issues such as provision of lunch for school children, to reduce the burden on the State.

Other general recommendations:

- The Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (MOFPED) noted that the public should always endeavor to make contributions to sector budget allocation exercises to ensure that their views are captured in the National Budget.

- MPs recommended that the FY 2014/15 Budget should always lay focus on improving human resources otherwise focusing on construction of schools, health centres and roads when there is no man power to deliver services does not contribute to service delivery.

- CSOs recommended that government effects the re-establishment of Cooperative Banks to provide adequate credit facilities to small-scale farmers, since commercial bank lending rates have remained high despite the Central Bank's subsidized rates.



Mr. Julius Mukunda (Coordinator, CSBAG) presented the Civil Society Statement on the 2014/15 Budget Framework Paper during the dialogue.

Pictorial



Ms. Pauline Apolot (left) from the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF) and Dr. Margaret Kigozi (former ED, Uganda Investment Authority) were among the guests at the Pre-Budget Dialogue.



A Member of Parliament contributes to the discussion during the plenary session. A total of 18 Members of Parliament attended the dialogue meeting.



Mr. Ambrose Toolit, a Programme Specialist at Dan-Church Aid (Uganda Office) makes a submission during the plenary session.



Participants at the meeting benefitted from a wide range of UDN publications and other advocacy materials.

UDN wishes to thank all who participated in the FY 2014/15 Pre-Budget Dialogue and recognises the hardwork and efforts of the CSBAG team to make the event a success. We also specially appreciate our beloved Board Chairman, Prof. Ezra Suruma for gracing the event.